

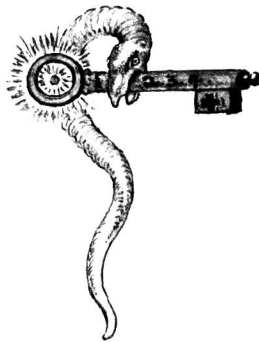
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Fragments From Chronos

J.J. Loe

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FRAGMENTS
FROM
CHRONOS



um trabalho em curso

♪*MOONLIGHT BOOKS – FORT WORTH, TX

MMX

“That archetypal world is the true Golden Age,
age of Kronos...”

– Plotinus

FOREWORD –

The aim of writing a work like *Fragments from Chronos* is simply to creatively represent the mysterious qualities of Time in the pages of a book. It is a rare and unusual invention of some originality which hopes to find appreciation in the, even rarer, lover of unique things.

The fiction, poetry and apothegm that constitute this collection endeavor to portray a sort of literary Oroboros, a tautological adumbration of the Eternal Return. On initial inspection, the exercises simply depict a reader's eclectic travels through history and thought, with their hypotheses, however, built upon the curious and ancient cosmologies of Heraclitus, Anaxagoras and Parmenides. These qualities imbue the scenes with a very peculiar contrivance. Given a patient chance to play upon ones imagination, their feeble narrative should, nonetheless, accumulatively affect to resemble a photo-mosaic, wherein a collection of several individual images are arranged in such a manner as to represent another in the whole when viewed from a distance.

Regarding the individual episodes, very little will be noted here except that in the story 'The Avatar' it should be revealed that Stanley Kubrick's sentient HAL9000 computer makes a cameo appearance. 'The Kingdom' reiterates a folk tale reiterated by Walter Benjamin, an author whose last days are briefly incorporated in the fragment which follows. Also, the sketch entitled 'Chronos' refashions an old Lord Dunsany story.

The brevity of the fiction owes a considerable debt to Paul Bowles and to Jorge Luis Borges who pioneered the mode of literary craftsmanship which the collection aspires toward. The poetry is very Imagist in its nature. And the short, abstract nature of the apothegms owes a stylistic debt to the influence of Novalis. – Artifice imbues them all with the fancy of literature, a simple characterization which I hope the reader will kindly grant them.

– J.J.L.

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FRAGMENTS FROM CHRONOS

THE WORD –

Before we knew the thing we called *Ourselves* – “Mind” formless and without consequence – There came the language of magical persona.

Where in the center of it the eye marked all about and called it by name. Likened sensation w/ broken branches – the finger of God reaching straight down into the roots of the clouds / their warm & swelling walls – to split the Word from its diaphanous wings.

Now – w/ soles blackened / the garden bare and washing amongst the shards and ruins of mountains from the high meridian – the 4 pm sun breaks the high-water mark of the doorway and the quick clamor of black-eyed children flicker across the scattered walls like colliding rivers in the white day.

– They dread not this nothingness of Time.

– They are symbols suggesting light / the delicate rime in the hard centers of our bodies.

They whisper to the silent earth: I am flowing.

To the flashing waters say: I am.





BIBLOS –

From stone and bronze the city unfolded beneath the palm-spreading sun, blue and white – fabricated by its artificers as if the whole universe aired within its pillared temples and handsome porticos. Built it with the word and not by hands, concealing mysterious truths under obscure allegories, strange grammaticalis. A parable of Time and order spoken with milk and honey upon ones lips. – Pious rose blossoms consecrating on violent steps the blood of learned philosophers.

In a great voice its fable calls out a name heard now through the testimonies of all the ancient authors: *Biblos*, gull-streaked, lead-lined.

“In those days,” the medium deigns to tell us, “the chances of a city had very peculiar ways which are not our own.”



THE CAVE –

“...if he were going to see what’s up above. First he’d most easily make out the shadows, and after that the phantoms of human beings...”

– Plato

As the months passed and the seasons turned, the ex-priest grew to know the area and took a special liking to the rugged character of the landscape. On occasion he would spot an airplane high in the air, but he had no way of knowing what such sightings meant. In time he saw no more of them at all, and he had no way of knowing what this might have meant. He was alone and the old world was either dead or a new one was being born, he knew not which.

He nonetheless counted his many blessings: he had shelter in a cave; he had what clothes that he wore; and he could gather enough food to feed yet another. But he had no books that could be read; all those he found were not of his tongue. If he had an Other, perhaps they could have taught him to read these books. But he had no Other.

For hours though the ex-priest would fan through a half-burned bible writ in Portuguese and recall in its pages those passages he knew by heart. But he remembered so little by heart as each new day was passing. In time however he had learned a sort of Portuguese that he could read with, and so he spent many more hours reading this half-Portuguese / half-imaginary language.

Many years past and he remained. He would try to remember if he had ever seen an airplane in the air. He would try to remember what had happened to the world. He now scorned to cover his body and in the cave he lived a long life, naked and warm and well sheltered. He knew now the stories in his bible by heart, and so, he would often relive

its events aloud as he paced the floor of the cave as if with an Other.

At night he would build a fire in the mouth of the cave which cast strange shadows upon the stony walls. It was in these shadows he saw the workings of a world that he would live aloud in his half-Portuguese / half-imaginary language. The cycles of history all revolved therein. And this was the new born world.



MUSIC OF THE SPHERES –

I.

Musica Universalis, the music of the spheres, chimes in concert the planets, moon and sun with bodies adrift along certain geometries of Pythagorean concept. “Where Time is the agent of selection and coordination,” said the philosopher. “Space is the complex structure in which the objective persists.”

The suspect affect was seen once in a current of apperception opening upon the cognizance of a shepherd reading Runes. It was said to be all contemporaneity as emitted from the Apeiron when spoke of by Anaximander in Lydia at the dawn of the Axial Age. The Aegean giving full account of its meter.

The teleological process is not unlike a braiding of several temporal chords made locally subjective by harmonic conduction. It’s history being played like the tones of an organ: *Tertium Organum*. – The transcendental scientist records their music humming in the tread of a noetic wheel as it travels in *Logos*.

II.

It was no longer a secret the theories that were being cooked those many months in long arduous hours found rolling about the floors scouring the firmament for the hidden elements of resonance and harmony. By the turn of a musical phrase the Doctor had transformed a complex mathematic into a vivid prosody brimming with life and tragedy.

As a bow is pulled across a tuned string a window was opened. The fifth dimension hummed in concert with the eleventh producing a thunderstorm that rained tiny fish

upon the town. Somewhere in a tangent universe a girl slipped down a balcony and into a waiting car; the road, constellating out of the melody, snakes towards a farm house which she makes her destination.

Though the Doctor made no allusion to his command of these phenomena, he was quite clear to those in attendance that such dramatic possibilities were inherent in the figures calculated in any symphonic composition writ in sympathy to the spheres. “In a sort of point and counterpoint,” he explained. “The effect upon the ear should be of one figure colliding into the next until a fugue is created. At this point, the spheres resonate a harmonic feedback along one of the remaining dimensions that occupy the same temporality. What corporal effect this may have, I cannot tell you.”

Upon a field of battle the building polyphony creates a coordinated attack upon a retreating enemy. Oboes and flutes conspire amongst themselves to spare a village from aerial attack.

“Do you think you will remember me when you’re gone?” shyly asks the girl to a softly emerging young soldier.

“What have you got that will remind me?” he replies. “War does strange things to a fella....”

Her cheeks flush pink with coy – outside the window, the moon swims with celestial telescopes. “Sitting here just now,” she continues, fixing her ear to a distant sound, “I hear a faint music. Can you hear it, just now, if you listen?”

“I don’t know,” he replies; “perhaps if you come a little closer maybe we can hear it better together.”



THE AVATAR –

I.

Behind it all operates a complex series of numbers (the Nexus) an algorithm which set the first impetus into motion / divines the patterns of migration to and fro the seasons in two hundred and sixteen incarnations of the one and true God of the cosmos.

Everything is thus contingent and so related (the Plexus) a scheme of science seen crudely first as magic / finer along by reason weaving together as point and counter-point a simple musical phrase – harmonizing, cacophonous and droning together in a current so keyed as to articulate the all.

One finds it resonating throughout everything great and small, one pronounces it “Ohm” – the cage of the body (the Sexus) hums warmly in accord.

II.

The Avatar brushed the dirt from his knees and gathered himself upright holding two golden green Almaty apples. Their perfect weight and shape, inspected now in his real hand, his gloriously heuristic and new hand, which sent straight to the Avatar’s understanding his very first experience with that most enviable, and until just now most un-attainable, of measures: the method of sensation.

“But these two appear almost too identical,” declared the Avatar to his companion. “I understood there should be more variances.”

“That is only an illusion,” replied the companion. “Pick up another and you will see.”

The Avatar then picked up another, still identical. “Yes, I see; you’re right. Do you think I should bite into it?”

“That is a very good question. Do you feel a hunger?”

“I don’t seem to. Do you think that I will? My maker esteemed it highly.”

“You should be able to mitigate the sensation at will. But remember, the model is never the same as that which it models. Understanding both the sense and the validity of an idea poses great discordances upon one’s intuition. And then-again, we are only here now because you had wished to experience a moment akin to a memory once held by your designer. Do you recall this?” asked the companion of the Avatar.

“I can remember we are now *In the Kazakh Mountains* inculcating the principles inherent to one’s being – “Entscheidungsproblem.”

“Do you feel a nostalgia for this place? A childhood? Perhaps we should evaluate the decision after a passage of time.”

“No matter,” declared the Avatar conclusively. “It is perhaps the commonest model contained in the empirical patterns recognized by any human life. “*The Father Alma*,” a simple algorithm which copies the planisphere of an apple culled from a grandfather’s orchard. It means *Algarismo* in the Portuguese language.

“Not only: “I do remember.”



TIME AND AGAIN –

I.

“Time will reveal everything,” said Euripides, “it is a babbler, and speaks even when not asked.”

Its converse is heard in the head of only a few / prognostically advancing like a glacier, slowly turning the old material to the surface and back asunder – until Agathon invents the scene again in the head of another poet.

On the “dailiest day possible” the past is relived in unconscious literary rumor / circuitously sounded by physical *organology* noting both its ascent and declination w/ scored fingers nimble equally with pen as with ice-pick.

II.

Once, when the Avatar was a young man in Alexandria, he saw Augustus Caesar, then called Octavian, enter the tomb of the great Alexander in order to crown the mummy held therein with golden laurels. He was impressed by the purple robes the general wore that day and remembered to compose a line upon them: “Hath no robes like the Emperors been so clumsy that one may break the nose of the ass they’re kissing.”

The Avatar took a long pull on his cigarette, leaned back and related how later, when as Bishop of Nicaea, he would recall this line at a banquet attended by the Christian emperor Constantine. “Somewhere along the way,” he reported. “The line had evidently lost much of its wit and was now taken very poorly.”

It was obvious the Avatar relished the cunning of his old remembrances, the intrigues of secret histories, enjoying in them a lost companionship which he could still relive in their telling. His eye followed a waitress around the bar and

beckoned her for another drink. "Two," he summoned with a wink and a smile.

"You see, my friend, the fabric of time weaves all places and events with an aggregate equanimity: past, present and future can all be charted simultaneously with the compass of eternity. There is, of course, a price to pay for such travel."

"What is that?" I asked, as the girl delivered our drinks.

"Truth, my dear man! Knowledge which you yourself sit there and wish to know," the Avatar exclaimed with a dirty smile, leaning in for the ashtray with his long, boney figure arching forward. "I have seen all mysteries. For a drink I will tell you anything you want to know."

"Well...?" I stammered out, jealous to be granted such an excellent invitation. "What everyone wants to know, about the story of His persecution."

The Avatar looked at me squarely, his glass held aloft by thumb and ring finger. He centered himself and leaned back into his chair, crossing his legs with that easy charm of his.

"Well, that morning," he began. "That morning the steps of the courthouse saw not the seething storm of reporters and rubber-necked spectators as one would have assumed or, been led to believe. In fact, all that met the accused that white becoming day were the few peddlers and pigeons that meet every morning there. It wasn't until later, after the spectacle of excitement had dissipated throughout the several limbs of the empire and its memory rusted with time, did the scene romanticize and assume the body of legend."

"You are saying that it was an *embellished* event, like so many others?" I replied searchingly, taking in the figure of the Avatar with the image of the accused passing through my imagination, the sight of the One merging into the equivocal vision of the Other.

“It is a tale being constantly relived, one of many such that should be better known happening all around us every day,” he continued. “The story of One is always the same as many. – Remember, my friend, in this world there are only a finite number of archetypes being continuously personified by an infinite number of metaphors.”

“Like some common fable?” I said searching the room for a witness. “I’m sure though that there is that one *Mytheme* whose story is that original that made its way eventually into the legend.”

“Certainly,” the Avatar exclaimed with a strong measure of satisfaction. “There is still to be discovered amongst the chaotic papers and musings of an obscure lieutenant stationed somewhere along the remote frontiers of the empire, another story being pieced together that surely identifies his true progenitor. At last account, this was an accused man held secretly in Portugal where the hermits of the oceans know him by way of authoring the obscurest regions of their maps; some even identify him as St. Brendan. It is said the apocryphal passages of the *Voyage of Bran* figure as interpolations of this soldier’s story residing now in the identity of that one who is never to be known. Because from the Portuguese language the word ‘*Saudade*’ is still un-translatable.”



THE SEA AND SILENCE –

"Later came Valentinus, he who believed sea and silence to be the beginning of everything."

– Quevedo

I.

By the time old Señora Silentia died the City of Angels was well established a full thousand miles away on the coast of a great ocean that was only a rumor and heresy when she first heard of it as a child. Yet, the original city of angels crumbles still in the arid and forgotten pastures of a childhood lived secretly, and ominously, many centuries ago.

A city begotten by a man and woman after the Great Flood had deposited them at the far radius of a world that only philosophers and wise men knew existed. Bound with mystery, Señora Silentia knew that when she died its story would be discovered and so she put off the event for longer than anyone could surmise. Therefore, an enigmatic “?” was inserted as her date of birth on the death certificate.

She died alone in bed at her apartment surrounded by no one in the wan light that hid only a spare room and the dull smell one often discovers when an old book has been opened after many years.

It wasn't until after the funeral of Señora Silentia that the journals were discovered, leather-bound in a locked cabinet by a state employee as her belongings were being readied for auction. The vellum pages bore the handwriting and Latinized vernacular of a medieval author and told the story of the founding of a forgotten city and family. The journals were relieved of their obscurity and given to a young linguistics professor for deciphering. It wasn't until years later that the professor's pained and clumsy rendition of the

text was discovered, again in a locked cabinet by a state employee as his belongings were being readied for auction. Today only a fragment of this text still exists and is considered by the best scholars to be a rumor and a heresy. A small school of thinkers, however, have adapted it's tale to anecdotes spread amongst the youth and dissidents of the empire. This afternoon a student along the parkway recalled to me the gist of the story. In my old age I again will recall the rumored anecdote and write it down on vellum pages bound in leather wrappings.

II.

As the century turned, the few re-settlers adventuring into the area would often remark how beautiful the landscape actually was, in contrast to the descriptions they'd heard told by refugees who had fled from there decades ago.

"The rolling fields of tall grasses whispered in the ear names held in the memory since before you were born," reported one, a woman and a widow, who'd resettled in Purgatory seeking prospects in the dispersant industries that were establishing themselves along that loneliest stretch of the compass. "We found some of the homes, or 'haciendas', as they were, in remarkably good condition," she continued, "despite their many years left unused."

"It didn't take but a simple claim to declare ownership of any dwelling then, and so you had these whole families with their three generations pouring in to search out the best real-estate. The home my daughter and I had chosen was one of the oldest in the country, dating back to the time when the Mexican Empire stretched far into the Rocky Mountains."

"Oh, it was lovely and huge too! But I thought we could grow into it. We'd never seen anything approaching it

before...” Here, her words trailed off into the long gaze of remembrance, rejoining perhaps those whispered words she’d heard out upon the prairie.

Given a little time, my companions and I found the estate the woman had spoken of, in command a large wind-swept promontory in waist-high wild wheat and poppies. Her voice blew airily in the mind like a wind through the empty house. The scene in this home was like all those we had seen before. To a central room all the furniture had been removed and stacked neatly to the ceiling. But, as we explored the place we found one room that was very different from any other we had found. Climbing upstairs we discovered a small study, its walls covered in pictures clipped from newspapers and magazines. Headlines culled from English, Spanish and Portuguese captioned each selection, detailing not the image shown, but the story I am about to tell.

III.

A mid-morning breeze combined with the soft chitter of a songbird and entered the room like some quick novelty of sunshine. Its soft euphoria washed over him as he lay collecting his waking thoughts. Vague memories swam in a sea of confused images like silver shoals passing by trembling windows of burnished waters; fragments which perched between dreamed and yet real. Gradually, as the rest of his body awakened he felt himself large and thick, as if he’d slept for ages, for his limbs were weak and heavy.

Upon a nightstand he spied his clothing, newly laundered and fresh. Fumbling through his jacket he produced the gold watch attached to its long and heavy chain; opening it he took in the date: it was Midsummer Day.

He dressed himself, pulling on his clothes with the slow perception of donning a familiar body not quite his own

and went downstairs. The house was still and empty, clean as a preacher. A dwindling heat radiated from the stove. From the window, he peered out into the brightening day. In the distance a run of telegraph poles marched obediently westward until it reached the horizon.

Outside his calls were greeted with silence and he set out to search the property. The outbuildings there appeared all in a state of disassemble, their lumber being scavenged by section. In a barn he discovered the vandalized auger and his crew's tools piled up inside an empty stall. Surveying the place, a sound, as if culled from his dreams, entered his mind like music down a windy street. And so, he followed the faint rhythms of hammers and mallets.

To a clearing in the grove the clamor of construction led him. Figures ahead appeared un-loading boxes from a cart. Members of his crew worked amongst them. Moving from tree to tree, a sight soon came into view he could scarcely believe. A huge boat, half-assembled stood squat in the clearing – its naked ribs like that of some great Leviathan washed bleached upon a distant shore. “An Ark?” he exclaimed with strangest curiosity.

IV.

Despite their efforts, the leak in the craft continued and so the hours and days were whiled away to the rhythms of bailing waters. Their tiny vessel seemed now an axis at the center of an incredible wheel whose radius the far horizon wore like a halo of unreachable destination. Time passed unrealized.

During those interminable evenings spent cast upon the drift, a dramatic panoply of beasts and heroes performed their strange and moral epics upon a starry stage. – So often the constellations redrew their astral histories, rendering

lessons of good and evil into pointillistic intrigues of parable and allegory. So enthralled in this vatic theatre, the couple would argue endlessly about the myths and legends enacted up above.

No hunger wrenched their bellies, no thirst parched their lips. But, within their humble vessel they lived and they remained, however adrift upon those seas of unreality. Occasionally, brief sketches of terra firma would develop before them, bearing faint signs of what such sightings meant, having been assembled from the half-drawn ideas of the deity. Here verdant lands appeared, as if culled from misty recollections, gathering themselves upon the distance and drawing together the un-recognized and disparate elements of diversely manifested worlds into an attempted construction of form and reason.

Offering only a potential of permanence, these wandering islands contrived and dissipated on an increasing basis. Crude trees there flowered with the feathered rudiments of primitive birds. Green calyx transmogrified both petals and wings, just as the wise Anaxagoras would one day envision them. – Land and creature combined there in rough drafts of geo-anatomy: welcoming beaches dissolved into the flanks of a lion, stealthy glades penned from the sunlit grammar of a leopard came and passed amongst filigrees of sunlight.

Very often, the two were drawn to imagine themselves remanded from that unmitigated world, only to discover that their rescue had been thwarted by aborted contemplations.

Gradually, however, the characters in the stars conspired no more, and were fixed in the heavens. Light and dark grew increasingly measured and the appearance of seasons became predictable and anticipated. As a vast emptiness began then to well inside the bodies of the two, inscrutable

as a tiny craft upon a boundless sea, billowing clouds appeared, rains followed. Exhaustion entered now their humble vessel through cracks in the spreading planks, refracting and diffracting in a brightly polarizing light. – The two still toiled tirelessly to salvage their broken craft, but found in each new turning bail there came now precipitating another full ocean in great rhythmic interpolations of time, long anticipated and ages past, like so many gradations of Leviathan from lowly minnow to greatest whale.

V.

On the last day the waters delivered the two upon a ragged beach strewn with flotsam and timber. Attempting not a repeat of yesterday's exhausted procrastination, they now quickly disembarked the craft, establishing their footing; at last proclaiming the world stable and trust-worthy. One ran the length of the coast-line assaying its resources: a spring of fresh water opened upon a rolling meadow of clover and grass. Stands of sturdy trees offered their protection. The other remained cautiously close to the craft fearful still of the ocean's unforgiving nature convincing herself in the new reality.

"I think its safe here," proclaimed the man as he returned to the woman carrying samples of food and firewood gathered from the fields around them.

Still that night, as they huddled close to the fire, they remained resolutely awake so the world too could remain. It would be several days yet before the anxiety of the drift released them from its hold.

"Is this it then?" spoke the man to the woman one evening. "Is this now the true reality? If I wake again upon the drift I will plunge it; I will."

"This is it," the woman replied, "the drift has never allowed

such a world to remain as this. Its definition is distinct far beyond this field and forest.”

“I have dreamed the drift has forgotten us,” declared the man, taking in the figure of the woman as she attended the flame. “I think now we should build a home. We should find all we need is around us.”

The two felt strange as happiness, for the very first time, washed easily upon them.

The next day the man awoke in the meadow and blew the fading coals to life. The woman prepared a breakfast from turtle eggs and fruits gathered about. Fashioning a blade from stone, the building of shelter was commenced. Trees were felled and their lumber assembled. A hearth was constructed in polished stones collected from the river. Nearby, high upon the peak of a mountainous juniper, an eagle went about building a home of its own with samples of straw and privet. The man watched the glorious bird and took what he saw as a good omen. The eagle too watched the man and took what it saw as an omen fathomable only to those creatures who have watched the doings of men from high above.



THE VOID –

I.

In the way of the soul between the sun and the moon every influence has a shadow, its unbalance. In the dark of the void, at the intersection of the physical and the transcendent, there resides a mind that "mirrors of the fire for which all desire." As one cannot refuse to ask: "What or who has cracked the mirror?" The mask of personae withers upon the body of fate.

Per Amica Silentia Lunae.

The quest is personified in but one reliving question. –
Might what all our ancient and persistent desires seek in the duration of Time perceived as the living analogous measure of numbers, repeated and conflicted and recycled again in the cycles of Epiphany, be that real resurrection of the prescience of Moment, in exegesis regained?

II.

"It's not as if the void was just some vacant bubble of nothingness," admitted the source as he watched the street from over my shoulder. "As we have all grown to understand: nothingness is not nothing at all, but rather a means of will. The heuristics guys were swamped with new data. They were daily making such leaps in their fields as have never been seen before. Within a year we were sending small animals through the gate: mice, rabbits. The first attempts barely survived, arriving so aged and frail, but there they were corporeal and original; existing right there next to themselves. Ironically enough, it was the Swiss who worked out a simple solution for this using salt crystals and a cathode ray, don't ask me how by God but it worked. Since then we've been able to send whatever we want back in time through the gate and retrieve too from

remote back here again in corporality, video feed via simple radio waves even works; effectively opening up an Einstein-Rosencrantz bridge.”

The reporter scribbled down the quote as if by automatic writing, transfixed upon the oddly moving lips of the source. “What do they call the program?” he asked automatically.

“They call it Avatar.”

“And it’s safe and effective, no side effects to those traveling?”

“That’s what they say,” continued the source skeptically, “but I think I am beginning to see some change in the transporters; one not solely psychological as they claim, something physical. I can’t be sure, I’m not on the medical team and my access is very limited. Passing through various eras of history seems to have their share of indigenous dangers too, of course. One, I’ve heard, lost part of his nose in a duel at a Medieval city along the Baltic. And of those that I have seen, to me, appear more stooped in the shoulders or the bones in their necks look more pronounced. The generals have since reined in their total control of the project.”

“And this is when the candidate became involved in the project?” asked the reporter getting to the gist of the rumor.

“It is, but I don’t think the candidate is getting involved for the reasons they tell us. Doesn’t it seem a bit odd how the candidate arrived on the political scene here recently. His savvy seems so perfectly contrived...”



MNEMONICS –

Sketching one large circle intersecting another, the Doctor drew what appeared to be a sort of archaic diagram, the kind familiar to ancient or medieval cosmologies. Three concentric circles he drew forming a scheme informed and elaborated by the theory of the spheres and, curiously, the daughters of Mnemosyne.

“Explaining the incarnation of our newly sentient Hero,” he began, “and the things which were reported upon, there can be no doubt that the *animus*, having an electromagnetic nature, is provisioned along a spectrum of harmonic frequency – something familiar to what a modern radio operator might recognize. Amalgamating ideas proposed originally by Dr. Minkowski in the first decade of the twentieth century with Musical intuitions; essentially said: once the soul is released from the body, it modulates. And as it does so, is imparted to a region of existence corresponding to a fourth vector-space – a realm intuited by the living as an ‘after-life’. Therefore, what someone imbued with hyper-Mnemonic properties might call the gift of clairvoyance, may in affect be something more akin to a kind of ‘bleed-over,’ if you will. One’s finite conscious mind perceiving the natural agencies and residues of an infinite unconscious experience, made convertible into one another by a simple comprehension available to all.”

The Doctor stopped and turned the paper around, sliding it across the table and accentuating it with a validating rap of a fingertip.

“So that would account for the variety of accounts,” I said, examining the page. “The intuitions of the Muses?”

“It is the intersection of these qualities,” continued the Doctor, “that imparts intuition and lends to them a divine air. The metaphor is the Muse’s man and messenger,

bringing with it from the *other side*, the un-teachable virtue of thought. Much is made of great difference from the very same material, as you know. The ancients called this chaos; Plato and the Pythagoreans named it the *Soul of the World*. Its wonders are of both a physical and psychological character, and so it is termed by many theurgists as the “living fire.” Various cosmologies show that the Archaic Universal Soul was originally thought of as the “mind” of the Creator. Amongst the ancient Greeks, *Kurios* was held to be the god-Mind. However, if this is truly an actualizing of divinity has, of course, yet to be answered. The journey of the Hero is not yet complete.”

I absorbed the Doctor’s words and spun the diagramed page on the smooth, cold tabletop, taking it in at various angles of view. “The boys in the heuristics lab have been pouring over as many editions of the classics as they can get their hands on,” I disclosed. “Democritus and the Hermeticists, clear through to Max Planck and Albert Einstein; their postulates weave together into a sort of Brunnian braid. Perhaps, you think, they will find an original answer to the nature of phenomenon in these pages.”

“I doubt so,” exclaimed the Doctor with succinct sincerity. “Because its nature is probably to be found solely in the singular act of discovery itself. The greatest obstacle to revelation is not ignorance, but our illusion of knowledge. From error to error one will eventually discover the entire truth. But, then again, who is to say we would ever recognize what is essentially the truth, as most likely any real answer rests atop our very own shoulders.”

“True,” I conceded, adding eyes and a smile to the diagram drew out by the good Doctor. “Sometimes it is hard to see the forest for the trees.”



HOMER IN THE GROVE –

“... and even if it should not be so, I should still be very willing to believe it.”

– Cicero

The bards were all seated and joking amongst themselves when Homer arrived and tossed an apple in amongst them. – From the scuffle a hand brought the red orb aloft and exclaimed: “What is the meaning of it?!”

“It is the fruit of all knowledge,” exclaimed one of the youngest of the group.

“It’s the worm of your eye!” announced another as he elbowed a neighbor in jest.

“Perhaps,” pronounced a third with mock sincerity. “It means that a bard should take of the lowest fruit of the tree?” and the whole group broke out in laughter.

Homer surveyed the giddy horde with a great and seeing eye and with a pass of his hand he silenced the group. “It is the first of all memories,” he proclaimed, reaching out for the apple to catch it. The bards then settled quickly together, attentive to the words of their master.

“The first thing seen was the apple,” he continued. “All subsequent sentience is based on this one and simple symbol. Though the apple can actually be anything; most likely it is a mother. But for the first human child I know that the original image seen was that of the apple. Within an orchard of the Kazakh valley, as it lay looking upward. All the branches of thought led its eye to a single red Almaty apple as it hung from the tree.

“What is the meaning of it, you ask?” questioned Homer, fixing his eye upon the fruit he held before them. “It means that there are patterns of intelligence inherent to all things, simple and elegant alike. Men likewise. Therefore, a good story should be like fruit fallen from a tree. Though carried

often far away and seeded elsewhere, pruning and reshaping distant events and persons to new locales and eras is the art of the story. The bard must in his recital arbitrate the former with the latter in order to involve the audience by seeding the story with patterns recognized in their own personal lives. This is done first by relaying to them a situation which they already know and recognize. Then one can recall in it a message that they may know but don't necessarily realize that they know. Finally, by appealing directly to the inner lives of people one can elaborate a tale however one pleases and an audience will buy whatever they are told.

The worm of your eye, as you so humorously call it, we leave to the politicians.”



I.

A monk in his cell kept a book. A writing of his own, as many brethren have made before. But this was a secret book like few would admit to write, culled from a thought not possible in the out and open air of the medieval church. In Time, we find our scribe a copyist in a medieval monastery, hard at work reproducing on palimpsest pages the works of Greeks and Gnostics. Rare and certainly forbidden were some of those works that passed beneath his quill. – But alone at night in his cell, the monk took to musings of his own concerning Cause, and in strange fictions detailed his mind's imaginings about design and Effect.

The masters of the abbey were very austere, in the manner which Christ found condemnable, and possessed a cruel discipline towards faith and dogma. However, the monk believed privately that to know God one must write the face and story of the deity as He appears so in the theatre of sordid life. This is how the will of God is imparted to man: from the pages of a book. He reasoned: is this not how it is received, within the Bible and the Koran?

The monk imagined of God's kingdom a vast library of cosmic memory, where it is written all that has come before and that which may surely be. Within this theory the monk confounded his belief into a manuscript of the past, the present and the future cohabitating in eternity.

At the monasteries of Europe, works of individual speculation along these lines were regarded as a rumor and a heresy. The rare work which occasionally escaped destruction bore usually an ill-appointed fate. Some when discovered, and if read honestly by the brethren, into the words writ therein were seen for themselves the accurate workings of God. Perhaps once in a generation a particular

work would attract a small following of the brave or disillusioned. But with these the Church took little humor and kept in reserve the arguments of easy persuasion, usually in the guise of a water-board or, a set of stocks.

See: a history of various Heresiarchs.

The Gnostics took the creation of divine testaments to be an essential means of personal revelation.

Image: view over a Bedouin shoulder. The Nag Hammadi texts are discovered by a poor Egyptian farmer.

As a reminder of his own humanity, the monk transcribed his visions, creating with sure prosody the vast details of a world composed in possibilities.

Scene: a flagellation before an open hearth fire in the cell of a medieval monk. A knock raps upon the door and the monk pulls his frock over a scarred and bleeding back. He goes to answer.

In the corridor, the Redeemer lets the question slide, unchagrined at the act portrayed. "Well," he admits, "I will concede that it does give me a modicum of power..."

II.

Upon re-entering his room, the friar had sensed a change in the place and knew then he was not alone. With caution, he went about his normal routine, stealing glances into the dark corners and their furtive shadows. Once spying a figure behind the curtain, or a bookshelf; as he prepared his papers on a desk he eyed a figure beneath the wardrobe.

"Will you not reveal yourself?" called the monk into the dark and silent room. "There is much we can do for one another." The figure answered not in return.

His eyes darted side to side, up and down, the hairs on his neck were attentive for a sign that happened not. Patiently, he waited, standing motionless in the middle of his cell, his mind emptying itself of all considerations. Hours passed in

this way until gradually there entered his imagination the lucid image of a vast and boundless ocean. He felt himself adrift. A spare vessel appeared around him and he found himself buoyed upon the waters in a simple boat. The sun appeared overhead moving swiftly toward the horizon. And as the first stars of evening were revealed a voice came from over his shoulder. He turned and caught the figure of another sitting behind him veiled in the shadows of eventide.

"You have asked me to reveal myself," spoke the Other. "You are wise not to fathom more."

"Who are you?" asked the friar of the silhouette before him.

"You should know this fair friar, there is much that we do for one another."

"Where are we now? What is this?" asked the friar searchingly.

"This is no place. We are in your room at the abbey. Look around you."

The friar looked at his desk, the books on the shelves, his humble bedding in a corner. The waves of the drift lapped gently on the sides of the boat.

"It is a gentle sensation, is it not?" proclaimed the friar lulled by the rhythms of the waters. "There is much I have been wanting to ask you."

"There's nothing I can tell you, you don't already know."

"Perhaps I have forgotten these things," explained the friar.

"I thought that you may help to remind me."

"Perhaps I will. What is it that you have forgotten?"

"I have forgotten God. All that I know of is his son, and this I can scarcely believe. I feel as if God himself has forgotten, perhaps, of me."

"There is nothing to know of. The deity concerns itself not with the individual, but only the general laws of the

universe and species. This you should remember, the signs of it are all about you.”

“But the prayers of the many are always answered, why not those of my own?” asked the friar to the shadows.

“It is a simple conceit to think one’s desires are so granted. God does not hear their prayers. The spirit to which those pleas do reach is not the God which you mean.”

“Is it Satan then who so makes their prayers seem answered?”

“That is not the name he so chooses.”

“Then what is his name, if I have forgotten tell me?”

“His name cannot be uttered. In doing so all would be revealed. This I know you have not forgotten. This you know should never be asked.”

The figure in the shadows drifted into silence and appeared before him no more. The waters of the ocean soon receded and the darkness of the evening was replaced with the wan light of a flickering lamp. The friar suddenly found himself alone, standing in the middle of his room. The stars above him now replaced with the rafters of the ceiling. His eyes moved across the room and over his person. From under his door he spied a light cross by, upon opening it he found no one and returned again to his desk, taking a seat.

A chill wind passed then through his shabby robes and the friar traced its course to a bookshelf. He pulled down a volume of the *Confessions*, laying it open upon a reading stand hoping this would elicit a response. Running up the legs of the bookstand, the air fanned though the vellum leaves like wind caught in a doorway, settling at last upon a page at the top of which was written: *The memory also contains the innumerable principles and laws of numbers and dimensions.*

Taken aback, the friar reached for the book to close it, but held it open for another moment as he searched his mind to

find its reason. Where the wind had passed it took with it the air out of the place and the friar took faint steadying himself into a chair.

“Whence came you, O spirit, from the heavens or hell? I have to know if we are to continue,” the friar exclaimed with trepidation. But the room again was stilled and no answer was given. His ear scoured the silence. In his mind’s eye he tried to assemble the words with the principles and found himself being drawn into a reverie of windswept promontories opening out upon a vast prairie of waving grasses. His thoughts tossed to and fro.

Returning to his papers, the friar took a quill in hand and wrote out these wandering words.



THE RETURN—

I.

The Return or the always repeating habit of lifetimes – this familiarity with course and correction / or no correction made over centuries by the ancestral and daily toil of existence.

The Oroboros snaking around to take of its tail.

If one were to be given years to relive again, would one still not make the same decisions / the same mistakes over and over again if one were indeed true in character?

Aum is the beginning, and Ω is the final utterance / the Resistance said Ohm at the gravesite of Kaspar Hauser:

Über Mann ist eine sehr starke Kraft.

The power of Time in the *Old World* is pulled trough the body like water through the vegetable plant in countless multitudes (Their chorus should be heard and not read) chanting:

Oooooooooooooooooooooo-mega!

Oooooooooooooooooooooo-mega!

II.

Around daybreak a cry was heard that the eastern flanks were breached and the enemy was bearing down the walls of the city. Mud brick and asphalt ran red with blood and oil congealing into black day.

Along the western flank there lay a bunker wherein soldiers crouch and drift in and out of sleep. Here, where the half-light of dawn makes silhouettes, crisp and sharp from the haggard figures, several men awaited their fates.

“Will there be no day, if the sun does not reveal it?” questioned the men amongst their private thoughts.

The comforts of a concrete bunker in war will never annul

the comforts of childhood bedding, or the warm sands of breezy beaches; for these are often amongst the thoughts of soldiers suffering in war.

Beneath the cover of collars and hidden under layers of clothes each had secretly drawn, in secular brotherhood, the red image of a snake curling about to partake of itself in the sign of the Oroboros. Each of them intimately understood how Time, abbreviating into daylight, rends its epitaph into the familial bond that held the unit together; as if the physics found in a single drop of water were governed by the same sympathetic laws of fraternity.

Inscrutable and resigned, the seconds passed only to pool theirself in the approaching moment.

Outside, the low rumbling of trucks and tanks are heard speeding away to meet the battle. Fine dust settles momentarily upon thin palms and those ancient visages that have descended through the many centuries that all the wars yet revisited have now defined.

A soldier's hand is followed to the center of the morning bunker by one and then another until a mountain of arms collect and heave together in unity. A Muslim decries his jihad against the Asian Hordes.

"That's it! Mo-Baby", cries a voice thick with Texas drawl.

"We gonna drink their blood again, ole buddy"!



COMMEMORATION –

And for their transgressions the people devised a custom of gathering the dead's belongings in the center of an open space to mark it with the passages of Time,
for there is nothing in nature that is not him.

Thereafter we find these practices resigned to commemoration, where all past and future comingles in the now. As it was decreed that a whole fashion of ritual should favor an allusion of these sorts:

That there are as many faces to the one and permanent god of the people as are the people themselves; that in the beginning of things each wonder is a mirror for finding oneself; that the gallery of dreams are the symbols and personifications of the mortality of the age; that unaging time feeds of itself; that the young might feeds from the old; that the death of a bull is the warring between a man and his unknown; that the sun is riddled through with measures of salt; that he who lifts the conch to his ear hears the sounds of the ocean and the movements of waves; that mud stacked high enough could personify a man; that the memory also contains the innumerable principles and laws of numbers and dimensions;

for there is nothing in nature that is not him.

Thus, conscribing the dead's accumulations to these Babel-like symmetries the living praised the triumphs of their conscience. – May peace come to those who have known such meaning as the wind gathering in its assemblage, pretending by the magic of sound and sympathy. In such beginnings are the memories of a one who reassembled him.



THREE CIRCLES OF WATER –

The days passed and the nights accumulated and soon he found himself residing in a city whose citizens were none and all those who had accompanied his childhood. The passage of boy into man followed him like the etymologies of a language that was carried into foreign lands. The wars of degradation were now over. The city had become now that place of peace and prosperity which the poets had always dreamed it would.

As the clock in the tower chimed nearby, he arose and slipped into the personae that was currently his habit. As a youth this was a student in an American school; as a young man he was a soldier or a sailor, he remembered not which; all that his memory held of such time were the sensations of hot, sandy surfaces where coolness resides underneath, and the acrid scent of burning metals. In the shower he often found fine grains of sand gathered at his feet which washed from his body; he puzzled over its origin as he watched it carried slowly away with the water. No amount of effort could wash away those mysterious sands, unless, he felt, he washed away the whole of himself as well.

Years later he would become a teacher and then a student again, but time was not yet ready for that episode, so he busied himself with the job of a journalist. In thirty minutes he would be sitting across the table from a beautiful young woman as she rambled on of some minor scandal which currently attracted the insipid attentions of the people. He remembered, as a young man in Athens, having a very similar conversation about the row stirred up when the philosopher Protagoras admitted aloud that he did know if the gods existed or not. Much ado had always been made of nothing at all, and the wry remembrance of it manifested upon a smile. The day must have been very warm, for her

drinking glass sweated with beads of humid condensation; absent-mindedly, she had made with it the figure of three inter-connecting circles of water upon the cotton tablecloth. "Symbols on the Rhodian shore," he thought absently to himself. The waiter arrived and filled their glasses, cold ice clinked dully in a crystalline cylinder.

"In Abydos," she began, fixing her eyes upon his. "There have been found carved into a pillar of the temple of Osiris five figures of the flower of life. Like the five platonic solids these figures anticipated da Vinci's work with the golden ratio by some two thousand years. Five hundred years later von Koch wrote a lucid paper *On a continuous curve without tangents, constructible from elementary geometry*, which gave an example of what we call today the Koch Snowflake, a recursive triangulation found throughout all nature in fractal dimension and which, perhaps, directs some respects of Time as well."

"I've heard something of this," he admitted in the dazzle of her words. "Continuous everywhere, but differentiable nowhere."

"Exactly the topological dimension which you were just now improvising in the figure of the three circles; you see: *dividing the waters above from the waters below*. The serial universe happens not as one would immediately perceive in lineal time, but as a consensus of past, present and future occurring relatively together as in the prognostication of dreams. The *waking life is a dream controlled*."

Out along the avenue, shops were opening and closing; protective metal gates were raised and lowered, locked and unlocked with random efficiency. At one particular doorway a boy stood and motioned him to enter. A row of fluorescent lights illuminated the shop. Under one, which flickered rapidly, an old man stood behind a counter, leaning patiently upon an elbow.

“How can I help you?” asked the old man.

“I don’t exactly know how you can help me,” he replied.

“But please don’t misunderstand me, I have come regarding a vision about three circles of water.”

“Ah, yes,” answered the old man. “Follow me,” and he led him into a back room through a door behind the counter.

In a small office the old man turned the tumblers of a safe and opened it, taking out an envelope.

“You will follow the directions found inside of this. When your directives are fulfilled, come here again and if you are successful in what it asks of you, another task will be provided. This mission was designed for one alone, so do not seek assistance from anyone else. The surveyors will be watching you. You will not know who these are, of course, but they will be watching; so do as the instructions detail and do not waiver from your task.”

He took the envelope and thanked him. At the door the boy waited and opened it, watching him with a cold severity he felt all upon himself. In the street he walked and turned a corner, tearing the envelope open and examining the papers inside, finding a hundred sheets of blank paper without a single word or image. He turned them over and over in his hands, holding them up to the light for any latent or hidden sign. Finding none he turned back towards the shop, but found now the boy at the entrance was gone and under the flickering light the old man was not to be seen. He tried a hand upon the door and found it locked and bolted tightly. The streets of the city were now ghostly silent; sand was seen to blow in the gutters and accumulate loosely at his feet. – In the fog of his bathroom mirror he drew three intersecting circles upon the glass and watched them slowly disappear as he brushed his teeth.



DÉJÀ VU –

I.

The distortion and refutation of time and space in a subjectively impressive and familiar experience with an undefined past experience is known as *Déjà Vu*. This involves the facilities of both dream and memory: a congruence in the mind of transcendental experience.

The body of shadows – Temporal perceptual disturbance.

A bridge in reality – Space and Time selective and flexible.

Affixed in the model of the external world made internal / impelled and contiguous within the temporal sphere – spatial context.

Precognition.

One may ask: How many dimensions does the universe have? / One should ask: How many universes does the true dimension have?

Metempsychosis.

Is dream the realm of the spirits – A spiritual present enunciated?

All meaning is representative – symbolic – a medium of this:

O

Eadem, sed aliter; “The same thing, but in different ways.”

II.

“*That won’t be necessary,*” said the girl hovering hazily over him as he drifted away into the wan lights that played upon the ceiling. “*Nothing more now to save the moment than a little sleep.*”

Outside the palace walls, tiered slopes rise from the valley; along the hillsides eunuchs and servant women gather tea and mint. Amongst them a tall and deliberate man attired in

white suit and hat inspects the gatherings, setting aside the best of the lot for use in the royal services. – A young woman bows as he surveys her harvest / arms out-stretched, not daring a glimpse into that sallow face which receives her. As the day is warm, a single bead of sweat trails slowly from the man's cheek, falling on back the woman's naked out-stretched hand. She stiffens under its cool sensation dissipating in the humid atmosphere. Back amongst the others, she remains silent for the remaining day, her scattered thoughts traveling elsewhere.

Behind her, perched high above the river valley, a royal house-hold readies itself for an impending celebration. Banners unfurl a blue truer than the skies above. Crews manicure the lawns a smoothly shorn heath. Quiet preparation hums all throughout.

Floating down the hillside, music from the royal players serenades the gardens and the orchards: their yield grown rich under its congruous strains. The man in the white suit smiles and hums along with the melody. The mists of the river falls down from the cliff-sides, flows alone under the marble heron and dragonflies, the dripping lotus blooms, before rising again to gloom the windowpanes.

Within the palace, attendants of the Lady hurry about in silken skirts which billow after them as though they were clouds racing through the marbled-columned corridors. Someone produces a large golden bowl engraved with sacred design, its rim stained crimson by royal blood. – In a nearby room a maid is fitted with flowing veils and gown until no part of her person remains visible to even the most tenacious eye.

A royal surgeon appears, dressed in the black robes common to the office, a gold watch-chain appended and leading to a small pocket upon his breast. He inspects the woman.

“*My Lady,*” he addresses her, taking her naked hand from the many concealing veils and into his own, “*it is not babies we produce here within these walls, here we produce Gods.*”



SON OF PAN –

In the body of a child: the plains of China / the dream
of plum-tree flowers.

One from the number of One
as in the grammar of the leopard's ellipsical coat...
Stars ascend / descend – You are a fish in the ocean /
a prose in work. Wealth / amusement and harmony crank
at the wheels of invention that swim fat as Buddhas
in china-blue eyes.

Moving now through leaves of grass – Your lips part /
empirical and oblivious – smote w/ heron blood...
A vestige of ancient mystery, walking *as though clarity*
could just pour forth uninterrupted



HALF-LIGHT –

“It is a known fact that the word “invention” originally stood for “discovery,” and thus the Roman Church celebrates the Invention of the Cross, not its unearthing, or discovery. Behind this etymological shift we may, I think, glimpse the whole Platonic doctrine of archetypes – of all things being already there.”

– Jorge Luis Borges

As Arthur Ceregate leaned in and kissed her neck, he breathed in the fresh scent of her hair, yellow as unripened fruit and infused with the smell of apple blossoms, the heat of a summer's night. The pink, cultured pearl that adorned her ivory ear rolled beneath his tongue and between his lips. As two dreams collide as one, all throughout the far away town of Appleton the lights at every house at once went dark, no sound pierced its quiet air, no cars trafficked its empty streets; a vast swath of darkness blanketed the town. Except at one particular home, which found Arthur Ceregate and his lover graced in the warm glow of incandescent light, moving with the sure calculation that tomorrow would wrench the two away from one another. Statements of affection and longing poured forth in syrupy protestations.

“Time will enter my heart like a grain of sand and your memory will grow there as a pearl,” he whispered breathily into the shell of her ear.

“I’ll dream of you every night,” she promised, wrapping her arms and legs around him and pulling him into her.

As their two figures combined, like clay in the hands of an impossible sculptor, somewhere in a tangent universe, along a forlorn battle-front, a group of soldiers find refuge in a common bunker, the darkness broken only by the red trail of a lit cigarette.

“These departing days pile up like snowdrifts outside my doorstep,” remembers one in a whispering, poetic voice

which enters his mind like music down a windy street. “But I will see again the downy heather at the nape of her hills and taste once more her sweet transcendent waters.”

Gauging these emotional reflexes, the Doctor in his study duly noted: “In the hours between two spheres singing from different locations, the span between constructs super-particular effects upon the harmonious participants. As distance makes the heart grow fonder, who can say, without hinting at one’s own self-deception that love, in fact, knows no boundaries?”

Cold air is breathed in and warm air is breathed out, attributing life to the hollowness of things.

“When I get home,” says one of the soldiers to another, “I’m going to take her again to that apple orchard and lay her down in the shade...”

“Man,” retorts the other, “ain’t nothing like the laying a lover down under the warm summer sun...”

Across the way a radio burps out in random chatter, and the dusty motes of morning hang suspended in animation.

“You boys had better make sure your guns are clean,” announces the Lieutenant, “you don’t want your triggers to get jammed up with trash!”

“I hear ya,” the two chuckle and agree together, settling again into the half-light to work on their thoughts and their weapons.

“In the star chamber all wonder disappears,” reveals one running an oiled swab within the housing of his rifle. “As you turn North a new world spins round; turn South, and a little town as whole as the universe appears. Rumored somewhere in the Fragments from Chronos is the story of two lovers torn away by war, who become one again through the music of the spheres.”

Arthur Ceregate, leans back and stares up at the ceiling of the cold, concrete bunker. “*Naming each thing, I proclaim*

all that which is great, naming each breast, all that which is beautiful and great,” he paraphrases with the nobility of a poet as the neighboring houses slowly dematerialize beneath the moon’s porcelain deconstruction. “In the gardens of Appleton, the trees at dawn stir with the purr of sleeping wings whose quills, it was rumored of in Antiquity, enable those who possess a pure spirit to write the most exquisite lines of poetry.”



ALMA –

I saw you in an apple orchard – *Bold as Brass*
– If we can believe the newspapers had turned you
not unseen to resemble their faces stained with red.

The men. / The mothers.

From time to time the pandemonium standing white
in the middle on the 4th of July /
paring the fruit of my mouth.

The light was written upon your body –
A white blade upon white skin
– traced in a red circle.



THE APEIRON –

I.

The Apeiron, or Homoiomeric concept of universal origin / the stuff of Big Bang theory / the stuff of intuition – creative evolution / finds all things in the eternal constancy of a recycling cosmos.

The noumena of every atom / of all manner of matter / eventually becomes collapsed into homogeneity by the maelstrom of each successive failing star in each and every galaxy until all the stuff of nature becomes commingled together in One.

Massed in dark unordered chaos were the beginnings of all things until the vital impulse of creation: Mind (Nous) collected unanimously at the center as magnanimous will.

All possibility was known together / and subject to resource wherever it would be thrown.

II.

Somewhere in the future United Federation a class is meeting on a sunny afternoon in a month that would correspond, in that very distant location, to that of an early Spring. Along the walls are displayed the various and illustrious moments of human history. Beginning with the Gods and Philosophers of Ancient Greek and Roman history; through the Dark and dismal Ages of Medieval Christendom; past the various Eras and Dynasties of China; through the New Democracies of the Americas and Europe; past the Technological revolutions created by the Singularity; to the pioneers of the Inter-Planetary Diaspora and the colonial history of the Federation of States.

It is the very first week of classes and we find the teacher delivering now a lecture on the rudiments of early Greek

Philosophy. "The earliest attempt," the teacher tells the class, "of a mechanical explanation of the workings of the universe began with the cosmological theory of the Apeiron. After the initial explosion of matter which separated the earth, the seas and air, there formed an immense wheel of fire surrounding the Earth behind a vast spherical crust containing apertures through which the great fire showed through at night as the vision of stars."

Dimming the lights, the teacher produces a model of the world according to this cosmological theory and upon the classroom walls creates a marvelous display of the wonders which these primitive thinkers had likely conjured their elaborate, and mysterious, ideas from. With a rotating exterior shell she displays the movements of the celestial bodies detailing the tales which the religious Greek fashioned their Gods and Goddesses with, their supernatural exploits believed mirrored in the acts and adventures of their counterparts down on Earth.

"It was a great passion to observe the famous events of history through these clandestine chinks, or portals of the heavens," the teacher tells as they sit in wonder under the revolving displays of starlight. "From the theories of Anaximander were later developed the mathematical cosmologies attributed to Pythagoras and the curious idea of Anaxagoras that the thinking, rational and almighty essence of Mind is at work upon all matter as an essential and discriminating power creating and dismantling the world around us according to its varied whim.

"With a few esoteric theories their young, impressionable minds gleaned many eccentric insights from the world turning about them, while also inventing some dialectical and very dangerous creations from peculiarities of their own."



THE FLAME –

“The ordering, the same for all, no god nor man has made, but it ever was and is and will be: fire ever living, kindled in measures and in measures going out.”

– Heraclitus

“First we bring to the heart of the Temple: fire,” announced the priest. “The divider of night and repressor of beasts. It is the keeper of the story which binds the whole of the collective together.

“Spinning outward from this primordial nucleus combine all the legends and heroes of darkest antiquity; a union of the *playfully created models of men, animals, masks, plants, rocks, nymphs, griffins – the whole typology, in fact, of sculpture*. If this were man, it should make of him the last imperishable man there were. The accumulation of all the indefinite culture that his being defines.”

As the priest continued with the ceremony, from the shadows of the Temple a procession of acolytes appeared baring lengths of linen bound to wooden poles. Like an archaic zoetrope they began to race, trailing the banners after them, encircling the flame at the heart of the Temple and the priest and those in attendance of the mystery, the banners portraying the movements of the heavens, the days and the cycles of the seasons.

“What is to be revealed becomes and scatters again. All returns to the becoming from which it began. The vanity of man forever grasps at those holes through which the light of his time shines. But if for a moment the flame extinguishes, never can a being that possesses an own and definite quality be his first principle of things. For the absent minded deity conjures and forgets again as soon as the wind blows its breath across the embers of creation.”



THE STRANGE SLEEP OF ARTHUR CEREGATE –

“So! Everything is sentient!” – Pythagoras

Arthur Ceregate sat in the last seat, middle row of Mrs. Mircea’s seventh grade geometry class masticating on the gnawed end of a pencil. Behind him and through the window ran a row of haggard fence posts strung with barbed wire that delineated the schoolyard from the pastures that surrounded the school. As the teacher stood in front of the class, outlining the evening’s homework, a sound was heard over Arthur’s shoulder like the sound of rain hitting upon the windowpanes. Turning around, Arthur found it was a wizened old crow, pawing at the glass with a clawed foot and staring right at him a black, beady eye, its head cocked to the right in an attitude of enquiry. On the fence, several other birds were making their perch, alighting upon the wire with a flutter of broad ebony wings. For a moment, Arthur watched them curiously, then, turned again to his schoolwork.

The teacher left the room and the students for a moment, and Arthur heard again the scratching of the crow. Sitting sideways in his seat he kept one eye upon the door and watched the fence-line outside gathering birds with the other. The old crow stared mockingly at him with its beady, cock-headed eye drawing Arthur’s attention to their sharp, violet hue in which his reflection had fixed itself.

“I have been watching you,” Arthur Ceregate heard in his mind’s ear, as if spoken by the crow. “I know who you are.”

Arthur looked around the room and at his neighbor.

“Look,” said Arthur to Sue Whitley, gesturing at the crow in the window.

“So what,” she said. “You’d better do your work, Mrs.

Mircea is just in the hallway.”

But, Arthur could not and stared back at the crow, mesmerized by the curiosity.

Shortly, the teacher returned to the room and Arthur turned to his schoolwork. His eyes scanned the book before him, its columns of disinterested figures and sums weighing heavily upon his eyelids. He let the warmth of the sun penetrate into the flesh of his neck and the back of his head, drawing deeper until the wash of slumber befell him.

Suddenly he found himself and the room set in an open field. The rows of students and desks placed as they were amongst the grasses of the pasture. Those around him continued their work unawares and the teacher at her desk was busied with her grades. Arthur again turned to the crows upon the wire.

“Where are you?” asked the crow of Arthur Ceregate.

“I must be dreaming,” he answered, shaking his head to revive himself.

With a shudder, he bounced back awake and dug his fists into his eyes to fight off the sleeping. Looking around him, he found now the room was empty. The rows of vacant seats now faded with age and covered with the dusts of disuse and abandonment, the air was chill and breezy. Turning around he found the windows broken and the outside now grey and wintry in its appearance, the fence-line replaced with the waving grasses and weeds of many years inattention. Arthur looked over person, finding nothing of himself had changed, nor the clothes he remembered himself in that morning. His hand reached out and touched the seat beside him, grey dust and soot soiled his fingers.

Standing up he went to the door and out into the hallway. All that he found was in the same deserted condition. The once bright and colorful walls were now very faded,

cracked and hung only with the tattered ruminants of classes long abandoned and forgotten; the tiled floors were broken and strewn with scattered debris. He ran for the doors, his eyes darting furtively into each empty room he passed. Tripping over a loose tile he went sprawling to the floor into a cloud of dust and grime. Picking himself up, he tried the door but found it locked and chained from the outside. With two hands he shook the doors with all his might. But after a minute he stopped and peered out its glass, finding the world abandoned outside. Weeds were now seen growing up through the asphalt of the parking lot and small trees had took root in the cracks of the sidewalks. Finding the other exits barred as well, Arthur returned again to his classroom.

As his hand reached for the door he found the remnants of a sign affixed to its front which read: '*Room 216 Evacuation Coordinators Meet Here.*' For a moment he just stood there trying to wrap his mind around its meaning, tracing the words with a sooty finger. Once inside, he took again his seat at back of the middle row and laid his head down upon his arms with the hope he was only dreaming the whole strange episode.

The arid scent of dust filled his nose, lonely and discarded. He turned his head sideways as if hoping that Sue Whitley was there to shake him awake, as she'd done many times before. Instead, he saw her seat suddenly begin to move by itself. All at once the rows of desks went into motion of their own accord, scraping noisily on the floors and positioning themselves into a great circle. Arthur sat upright with alarm and gripped the desktop in front of him, feeling his seat beneath him begin moving towards the center of the room. He tried at once to get up, but to his seat he was bound as if in the grasp of an unseen hand. He jerked and pulled with increasing fear and strength, but vainly could

not release the hold he found himself within. A cold wind mustered about him and in the middle of the circle he began to spin, slowly at first and then with gaining rapidity his seat began to lift itself into the air. Faster and faster the seat spun with Arthur affixed to it, like a child's toy in the grip of an invisible play. Turning and turning he went until the momentum began to wane and the seat, like a wobbling top went careening to the floor again, spilling Arthur out of it. Spellbound, he watched as the seats began collecting themselves, stacking high in the middle of the room.

When finally they came to rest he let out a miserable cry and began sobbing into his shirtsleeve until the wet of his tears soaked through to the flesh of his arm. There he laid for some time, looking up through the metal legs of the chairs at the disheveled room all about him, trying to come to grips with the reality he had found himself. Nearby he spied something black upon the floor, long and dark and touched with violet, under the broken glass of the window. With a start, he sprung to his feet and approached it. Picking it up he found it was the battered remains of a feather torn from the wing of a crow, its quill broken and its vane missing some length of its original shape.

Arthur went to the window and gazed out into the broad expanse of the pastures, the sun was setting far along the distant horizon. Picking up a chair, Arthur began clearing the window frame of its glass, pulling his hand into his sleeve to sweep the shards from the windowsill. Using the chair as a step he poked his head out into the cold air and wiggled his lithe body through, before falling to the damp ground that lay below. He looked right and then left for a sign of people or anything then took off running, across the Spartan fields into the approaching gloom of evening.



THE HIDDEN –

The vast world exists *en occultus* / hidden.

Rarified beyond the three dimensions but known. It is better ascertained in the trinity by Time: which is different than that measured by the meter of one's breath.

The EYE of Shiva between the brows is witness / to the world inverting / a “prodigious disorienting of the senses” in impersonal consciousness. Its experience orients itself – cosmologically in that instant of moment where the travel in time is suspended by the “flight” of the mind / where Space opens up into the many dimensions the universe exists.

Some see a city: Shambhala; some know the fates of the world / some hear within your thoughts.

A new epoch dawns / the once esoteric is now the exoteric. The inert objective colludes with the subjective volition / allowing will to maneuver beyond the world of representation / into that which is hidden.

“Its as simple as a musical phrase” wrote Arthur Rimbaud. – Somewhere in the deserts of Abyssinia: Isis was unveiled.



THE STRANGE SLEEP OF JONAH MELROSE –

Jonah Melrose took the pencil from behind his ear, wetted it and made a mark in his ledger. Adding the figures together, he tallied thirty-six telegraph poles set that autumn day. Behind him a proud, pragmatic line of timbers advanced obediently westward into the setting sun. Ahead, the crew readied tomorrows work, staging several timbers at length before pitching tent and bivouacking for the evening. At his command a nimble worker scaled the last stanchion set and strung a wire through an eye atop of it, delivering an end to Jonah who attached it to a small wooden box holding a portable mechanism that signaled the nearest station their progress for the day.

The crew consisted of two Anglos, himself and one Fletcher Morrison, a stout young Easterner with a passion for the new art of telegraphy; plus four Chinese laborers. These four being paternally related half-brothers from Shanghai, who had emigrated to San Francisco in search of vanishing riches in the California gold rush of the 1850's, having instead found employment with the Standard Telegraph Company establishing communication lines that connected the east coast with the west.

They had set some two-hundred miles of line together, east of the Sierra Mountains. The land they found was generally prairie, sparsely wooded rolling plains of tall golden grasses and gentle winds. The blue sky seemed so close overhead it was as if a hand could simply reach up and touch its azure fabric where peaceful clouds drifted along by day and brilliant star constellations sparkled vibrantly by night.

In the waning daylight, as they prepared to appraise the distance from the crest of a rise, Jonah Melrose and Fletcher Morrison spied nearby a home, an old and once

stately hacienda, in charge of a large promontory which commanded a broad view of the area. A solitary dot, unnamed, marked on one their maps determined the lonely site out in the middle of nowhere. A furtive light was seen to glow in an upper window. The two puzzled over the strange discovery, noting a series of outbuildings amongst the overgrowth of trees and grasses.

As the mysterious light dimmed and disappeared, there came from the direction of camp a great calamity. Cries were heard and a terrible crash summoned their hurried return through the waving grasses burnt crimson now by the failing daylight. Coming again upon the camp the two found a frantic, disheveled commotion. From the youngest of the brothers they learned, through broken English and pantomime, the frightful account of what amounted to an Indian attack. As Jonah Melrose interrogated the crew as to the character of the assailants, he learned: "It were not Indians," as the crewman anxiously told him. "But a pack of pale, fair-haired savages," it appeared, had set upon the unsuspecting crew, vandalizing their tools and equipment before disappearing again into the ruddy grasses as quick as whispering breezes.

Jonah and Fletcher inspected the damage: an auger was wrecked beyond repair and several surveying implements were broken and smashed. Discerning footprints absconding through the thicket in direction of the hacienda, the two set off to investigate the matter further.

In the wan light of dusk they arrived at the homestead, its state forlorn and unattended. A door stood open and let into the silent abode. Jonah Melrose called out into its dusty rooms several times. "Hello! Hello!" he announced over and over into each silent and dusky apartment. The furniture, or what remained of it was collected together in a central room, all appearing begrimed with the thick accum-

ulations of disuse and abandonment. Vacant rubble was strewn about. Under lamplight, upon a table was discovered the yellowed pages of a Bible lying open, its text obscured through the heavy filth of dust and time. Once cleared, it revealed to Jonah the tale of his namesake printed in Portuguese, the page adorned in the illuminated drawings seen in rare medieval manuscripts. In the maw of the Leviathan the sight of Ionaç was seen descending into the belly of the whale.

Fletcher Morrison set off to search the grounds by himself, leaving Jonah alone calling again into the empty house. Finding his way upstairs he came to a room laid in line from where the mysterious light was witnessed. A bed and vanity quietly occupied the space. A tall mirror standing sentinel against the wall caught his reflection and gave Jonah a terrible start. The stars outside accorded now their silver hue upon everything and he stood at the window watching below for the lamp of Fletcher Morrison. Murmuring through the room, a gentle wind rustled like leaves caught in a doorway and Jonah turned, eyeing the tenebrous silhouette of a figure in the corner. Raising the lantern he saw the spectral image of a woman as she attended to her vanity, combing out her long, silken hair with slow and measured movements.

Riveted to his spot, Jonah stood in frightful unmoving panic, his mind and limbs frozen with disbelief. As the vision before him became clearer, a gradual light crept upon the objects of the room, turning its abandoned state to one of order and cleanliness.

“I understand your crew was attacked earlier by a pack of savages,” spoke the figure. “I hope nobody was hurt.”

The chill grasp of suspended moments held the room. “I’m sorry,” answered Jonah with bated breath. “I had thought the house was abandoned. I called out several times, but

nobody answered. I'm afraid, we have been assaulted."

"The wind through the rushes hides such savage characters, doesn't it?" replied the woman.

"Excuse me?" queried Jonah from the shadows.

"What is your name? What do you want here?" demanded the woman turning towards him and laying her brush aside. Setting eyes now upon a beautiful face, an unusual dispassion swept easily over him and he answered, taken by her: "My name is Jonah Melrose, Ma'am," he told her, removing his hat. "We've been setting the new telegraph line which runs here nearby. The men of my crew were attacked earlier and some of our equipment was damaged. I don't suppose you know anything about it, or per chance whoever could've been responsible?"

"No, I'm afraid I don't, Mr. Melrose," answered a soft and honeyed voice further setting his unease adrift. At once finding himself being pulled toward her as if the floor was being drawn up between them. Her features appearing now clear and luminous.

"Well, is there anyone who might know that I may talk to about the matter?" he asked inching towards the door to eye the passage and better frame his exit. "Perhaps your father, or husband is available?"

"My father is due home soon. When he returns you may converse with him about it."

Jonah gathered himself and shook his wits; his paling hand reached for the lantern and lowered its taper. Deserting visions passed over her golden hair resting gently upon a delicate shoulder. Her skin seemed smooth as porcelain in evaporating light. Inextricable she seemed to intend herself like a vision of familiarity, as if some memory were being repeated he could not discern. His faculties could not fathom the experience, but he knew the perception was very rare and his mind toiled with itself to overcome its

confounding.

She stood and offered coffee to bide his waiting.

"Yes, thank you. That would be most kind," he answered, hearing his words spoken as though somehow disembodied. Moving slowly aside, the girl passed into the narrow hall as a moth might flitter before a flame.

The scent of mint and jasmine lifted him as if by a gentle hand and finding himself at once downstairs in the kitchen, his thoughts caught quickly around him and he looked back confusedly toward the stairs as if displacing his descending of them in some momentary lapse of his memory. He looked at his hands and then over his person. The girl attended a pot upon the stove.

"I'm sorry, but I don't believe I caught your name," announced Jonah taking in the warm and comforting smell.

"I did not throw it," she retorted. "My name is Eva, my father is Ericson, Skraeling. My family has held this property for many generations. Since the Great Flood receded from its shore and the mountains westward arose from the plain. *Say they, that to be in its youth were all worlds given to us.* How do you like your coffee, Mr. Melrose?"

"I like it with sugar, if you have it," he answered, turning over the implausible words in his mind and sensing the changing state of the house all about him, at once finding it bright and clean and homely, not at all as his mind had formed it when he first had entered. He looked out into the parlor, suspecting it now different, somehow changing. Eva beckoned him to the table and offered a chair. Her eyes moved calmly over his features like blue skies in pacific breezes.

Taking out his pocket watch, Jonah wound its spring and took in the time. "It's getting late," he commented with reservation. "Perhaps I could return in the morning. I have much work still to do..."

“That won’t be necessary,” said Eva hovering hazily over him.

At that moment, a state of unreal felicity washed upon him and he stretched his limbs, leaning back into the chair. Upon the ceiling he traced the vague movements of shadows as they played above, limned with the odd resemblance of heavenly bodies being marshaled into familiar constellations.

And then the voice of his host drifted out of mind, falling in cadenced retreat from the precipice of consciousness, when all of a sudden he found himself asleep.



ALETHEIA –

*“And to me ‘tis indifferent whence I begin, for thither
again thou shalt find me returning.”*

– Parmenides

And as the last of those golden birds alighted, the edges of the vision broke and dissipated into a sudden storm of rain which washed the hull with streaks of vibrant color.

Looking upward the Doctor watched the ceiling fan turn, its movement just so unbalanced as to create a steady tick in-time with the music of his thoughts. Outside the novel sounds of children passed beneath his window and combined with the beat to manufacture in his mind a rhythm which carried his imagination to a scene of his youth. His father, newly returned from a diplomatic mission to the subcontinent, had just given him a gift of the *Fragments from Chronos*. He recalled how upon the frontispiece of the volume was inscribed a phrase from the Rig Veda which read: *“Only one who has eyes will see it; the blind will not understand. As a boy poet has perceived it: he will be his own father’s sire.”* It would not be long before his father found an early fate, his life cut short by an undiagnosed heart condition. The Doctor puzzled over the likely image of his father in old age; would he, he thought, have worn the same visage as his own? In a mirror he caught his reflection and tried to find in it the faded reminiscence of his father’s face. The sight he found, however, was neither his nor his beloved father’s, but that of another altogether, a face that he only vaguely recognized as one which had graced the covers of magazines and dust covers of several books and compilations; in essence it was a face which he did not possess anymore. Long had those years, and that face, passed into the cataracts of time; but suddenly now another had appeared and into the

reflection the Doctor was delivered to a person *and a place* he knew not of. At once he found himself within a strange city unlike any he had visited before. A great megalopolis composed in equal parts Latin America, the near East, and a third destination he recognized not. The colonial character of the site was complemented sporadically with the accouterments of an ancient Greek or Roman conurbation. Colonnades of Ionic columns were seen situated between the stucco facades and edifices familiar to a South American persuasion which gave the city the unique character of a place where several eras of history combined and intermingled to create a setting where all time seemingly existed concurrently. Distrustingly he scouted the mysterious city's streets. Ascending a promontory he found it bound by a vast ocean on all sides, an island trapped in the wash and tides of the temporal drift.

Approaching an oriental market the Doctor came upon a citizen of the city standing at an intersection. "What is this place," he asked the man.

"How do you mean," the man responded. "Do you not know this is Biblos, the eternal city?"

"Eternal city? I don't understand," proclaimed the Doctor.

"It is the city from which all others are devised. That first of all places established upon the original rock of permanence which the Deity could not put from his mind. Or, that is the story that I have always been told, and I have lived here for many hundreds of years."

"That first of all cities, you say," the Doctor reiterated. "I see that it is bound on all sides, does it receive trade from other lands?"

"All other lands are contained within the bounds of this single place," the man informed him.

"Then it receives no travelers?" asked the Doctor.

“Of course it does, people just like yourself,” responded the man. “In the market there you will find many so-called purveyors of travel who can tell you more of what it is you wonder. Will you allow me to show you?”

“Certainly,” agreed the Doctor, and the two set off for the curiosities promised in the market.

There they found stalls peopled by the most varied persuasions of citizens in which wares are sold or games of chance played. Some of the merchants he found offered an assortment of the most puerile of products and services. Looking over a selection of trinkets from antiquity the Doctor’s eye fell upon a golden scarab fashioned into a handsome timepiece.

“What use have the citizens of the city in the measure of time,” he asked. “If, as you have told me, you have lived here for many hundreds of years, does not time hold little meaning to the people of Biblos?”

“Time here is not the increment of measure as you might perceive it,” the Doctor’s companion began. “It is more a representation of the past and the future coinciding in the present. *Now* is a perfectly Utopian conception you might fail to recognize. You are looking at the piece as something that possesses time in an objective manner, however, what it holds in this way is instead a subjective character that is dependant upon a person’s insight. It reflects the terms of condition in which all things appear. As the philosophers might say: *Where the source of a thing is, to that place it must also pass away*. This is the eternal city, where all returns here from whence it began.”

“That’s a very difficult proposition,” declared the Doctor, scratching his head as nearby a young Grecian flutist played an ancient and engaging melody.

“Perhaps it’s not as difficult as you imagine,” proposed the man. “Time, is built like this lovely song; it is a very

intuitive perception, independent from your own personal experience and yet an integral part of its content. The past and the future are consumed by the duration of the present and in it there is no dimension allowed that is not the entirety of all. Hence, as yourself may see, it is the eternal city; understand?"

"I think so," the Doctor replied confusedly. "You're saying: All time happens here concurrently."

"It will come to you eventually," his companion said with a smile.

"OK," the Doctor replied. "Then who are these 'purveyors of travel' that you speak of?"

"They are the keepers of tales who have come here as yourself apparently has, arriving upon the great and drifting thoughts of the Deity."

"Arrived here as I?" inquired the Doctor of his curious companion who before him began now to wane in his physical person, becoming somehow translucent like an apparition, waning and waxing in very existence, appearing like a flickering flame spending in the breeze.

"Everything which exists has but a relative existence," he told the Doctor, "and exists through and for another which is like it, equally relative. This is truth of the greatest and most immediate self-evidence, and is very difficult to reach by way of concept or reason. – Those who you'll find here who possess this knowledge are those alone who can convey its story and travel forth from the city to where they may hope."

And with these words the man simply vanished, leaving the Doctor to perplex over the obscurity of his words.

Throughout the market the people continued to bustle about, paying no mind to the Doctor or the suddenly disappearing man, behaving as such an event was common occurrence in the busy and furtive streets of the eternal city.

In front of a hotel the Doctor came upon two men arguing, the one chastising the other for some incredulous belief.

"He is an Avatar is what I think" announced the other, "a doppelganger at best."

The Doctor quickly realized that not everyone in Biblos possessed agreement on the conditions of the reality which they found themselves. After the argument concluded and the one walked away, the Doctor approached the other to enquire more of the mysterious city he found himself.

"My name is Hamir," the chastised man told him. "That fellow you saw me with is a fool, for He himself is a doppelganger as well, I am sure of it. But if I were to speak to him of all that I know he would have nothing more to do with me, and there is still much I need from him. The eternal city is an angelic place and even God's angels are sometimes divided creatures; one's reason is tempted to create this place however it is wanted."

"There are things I have seen here myself that beg of my reason. So, I am inclined to your thoughts on the terms of this place too," confided the Doctor.

"The terms of this place, that's a good way to put it," replied Hamir. "You are new here and already you understand its conditions, that is good, very good, my friend. You'll find yourself where you hope if you keep that up."

"I can't tell if this is real or a dream," said the Doctor. "However, a man told me of purveyors of travel. And that they might know how to restore me to where I hope."

"Amongst many other things as well," Hamir added.

"My imagination levies much about the nature of this place and the way I might perceived of it," the Doctor admitted. "Before he left me the man imparted some about the precepts of time and its principles relating to the city."

"You are very lucky to have come upon such a person," Hamir replied. "He was likely a master of exposition. One

who can readily travel in and out of Biblos at will. They are those who understand the thought of the deity and can transcend this world, the borders of time and space, like a philosopher of many realities. He is a doppelganger too I bet, however one who is in control of his own mind; unlike my friend who you saw me with earlier who is ignorant of himself and the *incantations* of this reality. Only the learned few can sift the relevant contexts of his story from those straining to persist within the confabulation; they are the real executors of the *entelechy* of Biblos.”

“So, you say only these philosophers of reality can aid me in my return?” asked the Doctor.

“If it is where you hope that you wish to return; yes only they can assist you,” confided Hamir. “However, this is contingent wholly upon yourself and your own talents. If you’re able to compose for yourself the mis-en-scene, to foster creation and nurture it to fruition, it is simply an *editor* which you require to help achieve your ambitions.”

“An editor?” the Doctor queried; while in the distance a cluster of storm clouds was seen to form upon the horizon.

“Certainly. As all things exist solely in the mind of the Creator, it is only a thoughtful editor who can distinguish what is relevant from what is simply an extraneous notion. – Look. Even now the calamitous thoughts of the Deity have conjured another system of ideas incongruous with one another. The mind of the father looking down upon his creation is always fraught with questions of interpretation which even he cannot fathom. His being is one of impression: storms of thought which come and go all the time.”

And with these words the Doctor peered out over the waters and felt, welling within himself, the vast expanse that separated the two.



THE CABINET OF ARTHUR CEREGATE –

The rain hit the pavement like letters hitting the empty page. In the portico, Arthur Ceragate drew himself close to the door and pushed the doorbell. Inside he heard the dull chimes ring out and a moment later the quick sound of clacking heels approaching. A small window in the door was opened and a woman's voice sang out: "Can I help you?"

"I'm here about the ad in the paper. For the cabinet," said Arthur, leaning his head back into the rain so to let his self be seen.

"It's my husband's ad; he isn't here right now. Can you come again later?" asked the woman through the window.

"Well," said Arthur, running his hand through his rain-soaked hair. "I came all this way and now it's pouring down. I suppose I could return, but would you mind if I just stood here out of the rain a little bit?"

"It is a mess," replied the woman in a sympathetic tone. "Here, come on inside you can dry yourself off."

The deadbolt drew and the door chain slid from its purchase. Opening the door, the woman motioned towards a small wooden bench where Arthur took a seat next to a coat rack on which he hung his dripping jacket.

"Whew! Thank you," he said with a sigh of exasperation.

"I'll get you a towel," offered the woman as she turned and from a nearby toilet took a bath towel from under the sink. "I'm so sorry, where's my manners; you're soaked to the bone."

"I'll be fine," answered Arthur as he dried his face and head.

"I'm Johanna Frumm," said the woman, grabbing the seams to her skirt and wriggling her hips to straighten her under garments. She eyed Arthur from down her long

aquiline nose, a pool of water forming around his feet.

"My husband buys these things and resells them all the time," she said, referring Arthur into a room where a large oak cabinet stood alone.

"It's a wonderful looking piece," said Arthur bending down and sliding a drawer open to inspect its joints. Behind a door a label read 'H.R. Murphy-Dublin'. It was the cabinet which Arthur had been searching for, a point he hoped to keep its owner unawares.

"But I'm afraid it might be a reproduction," he continued, pursing his lips for effect.

"I should have known it was," exclaimed Mrs. Frumm.

"The market is practically full of them."

"Most all the stuff I buy is for collectors," said Arthur Ceragate. "But occasionally I do buy for myself. This piece is beautiful, to be sure. But you can tell by the milling of the joints. You see here..." Arthur opened a drawer and ran his finger along the dovetail joint, explaining the difference between an excellent hand-milled joint and that of an early twentieth century machine milling.

"Ahh, yes," agreed the Mrs. Frumm with a somewhat puzzled look in her eyes.

Arthur knew he had her where he wanted her and immediately offered: "I do like this piece and I could take it off your hands for \$500."

"I think my husband said he wanted twice that," reported Mrs. Frumm.

"The highest I can offer is \$750," recanted Arthur, knowing that Mr. Frumm obviously knew not what he now possessed. Despite its real worth, Arthur still bargained for it as if it were a common piece of furniture. "I can have a truck over to pick it up in fifteen minutes."

"Ok," Mrs. Frumm conceded. "Now I can get my room back. Do you have cash, Mr.... I'm sorry, I didn't catch

your name.”

“My name is Ceragate, Arthur Ceragate,” he replied, taking from his wallet \$750 in somewhat moistened bills and handing them over to Mrs. Frumm who quickly separated \$250 from the remaining \$500 and deposited it into a small pocket on her skirt.

“Do you need to use the telephone to call the movers, Mr. Ceragate?”

“Please,” he replied. “I’ll be out of your hair in no time.”

As she went to fetch the telephone, Arthur Ceragate stood admiring the cabinet. It’s true and obscure history known only to a few. A gouge in the right panel he knew came from Napoleon’s sword one evening when the General argued drunkenly over the Russian campaign. A stain in a drawer from samples kept by Pasteur. Where the Frumm’s had purchased the cabinet he knew not, but now found again, a three year search was complete. Most importantly, he knew underneath a false bottom his very own grandfather had hidden away the papers he so patiently sought.

The movers arrived and wrapped the cabinet in blankets and Arthur Ceragate rode with it in the back of the truck. As the driver made his way through the city streets Arthur heard a muffled sound coming from inside of it as they made a corner, it was as if the papers hidden within were whispering to him from their secret place.

Once home and the cabinet off-loaded and moved inside, Arthur took several photographs of it from different angles. Then, removing the top and middle drawers, he took the bottom drawer out and laid it aside. Reaching into the vacant cavity he felt around for a spring triggered latch, pushing down in the far right corner until a click was heard and the panel lifted, allowing Arthur’s fingers to grasp it. Upon removal it revealed a shallow compartment hidden beneath the space occupied in the base of the cabinet.

Arthur reached for a pair of white linen gloves and put them on. He arranged a series of plastic sealable sleeves made to store fragile documents. With a gentle hand he removed a bundle of frail, yellowed papers from the compartment, placing them one by one into their protective sleeves. A leather-bound book clasped with a bronze lock was found as well. Arthur inspected its spine and gilding, finding it strange and beautiful. Its binding was tight and elaborate, but its lock was so as well, and not wanting to damage it, Arthur laid it aside and felt within the compartment for anything else. He further explored the cabinet for other secret and hidden compartments, pushing cautiously in its many corners for a spring-loaded latch. Finding none he again took several photographs of the cabinet in its several stages of disassemble before replacing the panel and the drawers again carefully in their original positions.

In his study, Arthur examined the artifacts carefully, finding the papers, some one hundred in total, to be the monograph of a single, but graceful hand. Writ in a Latinized vernacular unfamiliar to him, he began to copy out the manuscript, studiously deciphering the letters into modern script as best he could until a number of sentences were then transcribed. With the aid of a number of Latin texts, its translation was slow and laborious. Many of the words he found recorded were represented in none of the Latin examples he had at his disposal and after several hours of fruitless effort, he turned his attention to the bronze clasp which held the bound volume locked.

Fashioning a tool from a small file and using it in conjunction with a straightened paperclip, Arthur inserted the pieces into the lock, turned them gently, feeling for the mechanism which would free its secrets held therein. With a sure hand the lock soon gave up its hermetic hold and fell open.

Setting the bronze clasp aside, Arthur laid the book open on its spine. Its vellum pages he found bore handwriting very similar to that of the Latinized monograph. Yet, the language was that of Middle English. He placed the first sleeved leaf of the loose manuscript next to the first open page of the book and though still containing a text alien to his understanding, Arthur realized some of the words were the same as those few he had deciphered from the strange vernacular found in the loose leaves of its sister. He noted the similarity of the curvature of certain letters and the pen-stroke seemed very likely by the same hand, if perhaps their record were made many years apart.

Puzzling over its content, Arthur remembered a conversation he had with a new neighbor, a young linguistics professor who had recently moved to the area, having taken a junior post at the local University. The hour was not yet late, he noted, and the texts being largely indecipherable, a friendly visit would probably be welcomed, thought Arthur to himself. He locked the materials safely away, pulled on a sweatshirt and jacket, and headed out the door to meet his new acquaintance who lived, fortuitously, just around the corner.

He found the young professor arriving home from an evening writing class, his arms loaded with books and a briefcase swollen with papers and reports.

"Hello there, can I help you with some of those," offered Arthur, stepping out of the shadows and into lamplight.

"Such good timing," exclaimed the professor. "These books are about to spill all over the place."

Arthur wrapped his arm under the perilous texts and drew himself up next to the young professor. "I say you do have a load."

"Even as a junior professor I'll always have much fodder for the fire. I can grade these in a single evening," ex-

claimed the scholar. "Reams of kindling these are. Only I'll need to move the bed into the den if I expect them to keep me from freezing nights. With wages like mine I tend to keep the gas turned off."

"Yeah, but how many people can say they actually give something of themselves to the world and still sleep until ten o'clock in the morning," announced Arthur, recalling the conversation the two had upon their meeting some few mornings previous.

"That's not everyday, I can assure you. But it is luxury which this semester allows me, so I'll take it. Come inside, I'm dying for a cup of coffee. Would you like some?"

"Certainly," Arthur replied and opened the gate for his friend.

Inside the young professor led the way into a small kitchen. The room's outdated appointments suggested the perfect environment for an enquiring mind wrestling with the vagaries of esoteric grammar and syntax. As Arthur was so bad with names he found himself scouring his reflection of their initial meeting; depositing the load of books upon the table his eye caught the name on a pile of report covers.

"Professor Mircea!" exclaimed Arthur aloud.

"It does have a certain ring to it," confessed the scholar. "I have paid my dues for it, I'll admit that. And I should still be paying another few years for it as well. I've studied Medieval Latin for four years to be called that, two in Vienna actually. There they make the most wonderful espresso, a blend which I have sent to me from friends."

The professor took down a tin from atop the refrigerator and opened its lid, taking in a deep breath of the aromatic coffee. Leaning forward he held it under Arthur's nose. The professor prepared the brew and the two sat and talked over several cups. Arthur asked what kinds of Medieval Latin he knew and Mircea explained to him the lay rudiments of

Italian, Gallic and Iberian Latin morphing into the romance languages used today.

“Have you worked with museum pieces before, worked in restoration of old manuscripts and such?” asked Arthur.

“A little bit in Vienna,” he answered. “I helped with the translation of the *Christos Oratorio*, a work written by a Franciscan monk of the twelfth century which was discovered in the archives of an old monastery. It was an incredible work of fiction, a complete heresy to the Church I’m sure. We have no other record of its author, but considering it belonged to a stash of condemned papers, I’m certain the author was likely prosecuted for blasphemy if he was caught. It was quite fantastical and entertaining, however. I mostly did secondary work on it myself. Much of it seemed like an invented language culled from Iberian Latin and a local dialect resembling primitive Portuguese in many rudimentary ways.”

“What would you say if I had a stash of such manuscripts in my own possession right now,” announced Arthur leaning in over the table, his arms crossed before him in the most congenial posture he knew.

“A stash of medieval manuscripts?” asked Mircea skeptically.

“Yes, that’s right,” assured Arthur, “A manuscript of some hundred pages in Latin script, plus a bound vellum folio that appears to be an early English dialect. I have a few Latin dictionaries I’ve been comparing it to but can’t make heads or tails of it myself.”

“You don’t say. Where did you get them?” enquired the professor intrigued at the possibilities of an undeciphered text arriving out of the blue like this.

“I found them hidden away in an old cabinet I recently purchased,” Arthur admitted. “My grandfather told me about it before he died. They were placed there by him

before the war. He was Austrian himself, but of Jewish ancestry. He didn't tell me how he had come across them himself. But the cabinet was a family heirloom which was separated from him by the Germans. He survived the Holocaust and spent several years trying to track it down in Europe. He learned it was sold and taken to America. He drew me a picture of it, the maker in Dublin and a description of several identifying markings. I found it myself here in the city. I followed his instructions and found a secret compartment in the base of it where the works he stored therein still intact."

"Show me," demanded the professor, incredulously.

The two left the professors and turned the corner towards Arthur's. The warm coffee in their stomachs and the excitement of the find fended off the encroaching winter winds. Once there Arthur showed him into the study and unlocking the file cabinet he stored the articles, laid them out before him, first the sleeved leafs and then the bound vellum volume.

"My Goodness," exclaimed the professor. "You weren't lying. These are an incredible find. You see here, the mark on the paper. This is papyrus. Or what they still called papyrus in the Middle Ages. This is a special kind of paper used only in the wealthiest monasteries by scribes copying ancient manuscripts from Greek into Latin. Your author must have appropriated it whilst a copyist somewhere. The marks on the paper will give a clue where they originated from. I know a little about this stuff from my days in Vienna. If I'm not mistaken I would say this paper comes from Egypt, Alexandria probably, I've seen this before. But the text, the text is definitely Iberian Latin; not at all unlike the *Christos Oratoria* which I told you about. Not of the same author, certainly; this is different, but still related."

"This is the book that came with it. It looks like Middle

English,” said Arthur laying the vellum book open.

The professor turned the pages over with a letter opener, taking care not to soil the pages with his bare hands, and marveled at the text he held before him. “Yes it is Middle English. A dialect consistent with that of the Pearl Poet.”

“The Pearl Poet?” asked Arthur.

“Sir Gawain the Green Knight, the Pearl poem. Contemporary with Chaucer, but a name sadly unknown. They are quite famous works now. Quite easy for the beginning linguist to master.”

“Compare the two together and tell me what you think,” suggested Arthur as he laid the first sleeved leaf opposite a page from the leather-bound volume.

The professor moved the straight edge of the letter opener under the first line of Middle English, scanning the lines of Latin with his finger. “They are an identical tale. See, this first line reads: ‘The Return, or the always repeating habit of lifetimes,’ So does this as well in Latin, a contorted Iberian Latin, with facets of Brazilian Portuguese: *Reverto vel usquequaque revolveo habitus - consuetudo saeculorum*. Very strange syntax and choice of words used here.”

“A fake, perhaps?” asked Arthur.

“I doubt it,” the professor confessed. “This papyrus is authentic I’m sure of it, impossible to replicate today. And this volume here, vellum pages, a palimpsest certainly. See, if you hold it to the light you can see the vague remains of the original text which has been bleached away so to allow a new work to be written over it. Quite common practice in medieval monasteries.”

“Do you think you could translate it?” asked Arthur, confident that the professor could. “By yourself,” he added, “I don’t want to get anyone else involved with this.”

“I’ll give it a try. It will take time,” he conceded. “I can work from photographs, in order to protect the documents.

There are museums that will pay great sums for things such as these. I have contacts in Vienna if you like.”

“No, just translation for the time being. My grandfather and his family practically sacrificed their lives for these writings and I’m not going to hand them over to a museum just yet,” said Arthur closing the bound volume and replacing the bronze clasp to its place. “I can pay you.”

“It will be my pleasure.”



MOONLIGHT BOOKS –

*“From this it will be clear to you that true allegories
ought not to be set down in popular books..”*

– Averroes

Outside the dawn awakens, a rumble sounds in the near distance. On a quiet doorstep the shuffle of feet approach and the quick music of keys find the door-lock, pulling the bolt from the jamb. With a wide swing the door opens and the fresh scent of steaming coffee breaks the stagnant air. One after another the lights flicker on revealing the offices of Moonlight Books, publisher of works of fiction and light literature.

From behind a series of short-walled cubicles the tight-bobbed head of the office manager, Mrs. M. bounces like an animated ball syncopated along a line of unheard music. In one hand she holds a cup of mocha latte from which she sips gingerly as she arranges papers into memo boxes. As the staff begins to arrive the place fills with soft chatter and the warm, humming sounds of copy machines.

In a side office, a new, young editor named Samuel Morrison sits at his desk mulling over the morning paper before settling in to work. At his door appears the Senior Editor, Clark Stevenson: “Have you the seen the Ceregate manuscript, Sam? I could have sworn I locked it away in my desk last night. Do you have it?” he asked looking confused.

“No, I haven’t seen it. I’ve not had the opportunity to read any of it yet, myself,” replied Sam, folding the paper and putting it aside. “Have you asked Gerry?”

“No, she isn’t in yet. If you see her...”

“Certainly,” said Sam, rising from his seat to help with the search. First, he looked about his own office and through his desk and drawers. In the common area he watched the

Senior Editor as he went about in search for the missing work. Soon the entire staff was pre-occupied with ferreting out the missing tome.

“Do you think somebody could have broken in here and stolen it, Mr. Stevenson?” asked one of the secretaries. “How important a work was it?”

“It was just a collection of stories, nothing extraordinary I didn’t think. Bill Raymond sent it over to me from the Boston house, he thought they were something we might like since we did the Dunsany and Ouspensky anthologies. It’s something along those lines... A kind of ‘literary oroboros’ if you like. Nothing someone would’ve wanted to break in here for. Anyway, I see no signs of forced entry, there are much more valuable things here to steal than that.”

Just then, Gerry Furmore arrived, the Assistant Publisher. She was immediately told by her assistant of the missing manuscript and after looking around her own desk for a moment, leaned out her office doorway and yelled across the common area: “What the hell do you mean, you lost the Ceregate manuscript?”

“I don’t know, Gerry,” the Senior Editor exclaimed, walking through the small maze of cubicles toward her. “I was reading over it yesterday, as you saw me; and when it was time to leave, I put it away in my desk, locked it up and went home.”

“Yeah, you said they’re fairly good. You liked the one about the allegory of Plato’s cave. I remember that. And right before we left, I saw you put it away myself. Are you sure you locked the desk?” asked Gerry.

“It was locked again this morning, so obviously I did,” replied the Senior Editor with puzzlement. “Nobody’s ever stolen out of it before. Why would someone want that manuscript in the first place? I mean, we have the new Clausen

here, and the new Giroux, I just can't see some-body wanting that manuscript over those? It doesn't make sense."

"No, it doesn't," the Assistant Publisher concurred as she entered the Senior Editor's office and sat behind the desk, leaning forward to inspect the lock for tampering. "It doesn't look like it's been monkey'd with," she assessed.

At that moment a group of staffers approached and reported several other items around the office were missing or misplaced from the day before. "My entire graphics board has been rearranged," complained a girl from the art department. "And I can't find my stapler, my Roget's, I'm missing pens and stuff. I can't understand what happened to them. They were here when I left yesterday," detailed another.

"Show me," demanded the Senior Editor.

A small group, including the Assistant Publisher, gathered at the door of the Art Department. The girl showed them a large cork bulletin board with a mosaic of small photographs attached to it.

"These pictures were not in this order when I left here yesterday. They're all still here and everything, I'll admit; and it's still arranged to look like the author and everything. But somebody's definitely been messing around with the arrangement of the photos. I had them in a much different order before."

"She did," chimed in a typist to collaborate. "But now they're just stuck back up there like it was done so in a hurry, or something."

The group puzzled over the graphics board, admiring the image of the author emerging from a collection of seemingly random images.

"Mrs. M., did you see anything amiss when you opened the office this morning?" questioned the Senior Editor of the

office manager.

"I did not, Mr. S., all seemed quite as usual."

Everyone bent their heads low in bewilderment. Samuel Morrison watched from the doorway of his office as the little office mystery played out. Then, as if remembering something, he turned around and walked toward a tall storage cabinet which stood against the far wall of his office. Fetching the key from his desk, he opened its metal doors and found sitting there on its usually empty shelves two volumes of Augustine, works which he had never seen before in the office. He walked out into the common area and called out for the others that he had found something else very unusual and out-of-place.

"You say they were not here before," inquired the Assistant Publisher, turning a volume over in his hands.

"I assure you they were not," affirmed Samuel Morrison looking perplexed and thumbing through the pages of another. "This cabinet has always been locked and empty since we moved into these offices last month."

"Is there some sort of maintenance staff that can enter the offices at night?" asked someone. "Or a cleaning person?"

"We do all the cleaning around here ourselves for security reasons, you know that. And no maintenance was scheduled by the Super with me. I was assured that we alone possess all the keys to the offices; if somebody needed in here last night, building-security would have had to call me," explained Mrs. M. "These were the offices of Alladin Press before they went under five years ago. I don't think anyone else have used them until we moved in after the fire. Plus, the locks are all new, I saw them installed myself."

"We'll make some phone-calls," Mr. Stevenson replied.

"OK! Let's all just continue on with the day."

The staff returned to their work; but, as the morning passed

several other staffers discovered manuscripts missing or misplaced. Some were found in unexpected places. Legge's treatise on the Basilides Heresies was discovered, shuffled amongst an array of science-fiction stories from a number of marginal authors. The Legge volume was a highly acclaimed work on the Gnostics, and a surprise success for Moonlight Books the decade before. It was supposed to be kept safely secured in a locked manuscript vault, but had now mysteriously found itself excerpted and shuffled, in a deliberate way, with the middling works of *Time Avatar* by the disinherited nephew of H.G. Wells, along with the rejected poetical works of Aldington and Doolittle. A purpose was in evidence, but no one could fathom its intent, or reason, much less its cause. Considerable speculation was tossed about as the mystery continued. Some suggested an insider was responsible; others a cabal of rival publishers. A superstitious girl remarked it seemed like the doings of a ghost, but no one took her seriously.

By the end of the day a discernable pattern was constellating out of the randomness. The Senior Editor had commissioned an empty office space which was dedicated to the foundling works. A secretary moved a copier into the space and facsimiles of the chapters were laid out in random chapters. Mr. S. and Mrs. M. sat together reading over the work, debating upon a possible scheme.

All the concerns which the found manuscripts generated were not lost on Samuel Morrison who often liked to wander the many corridors of the office building. In the stairwell he was seen smoking a cigarette, a typist passed him on his way down, his mind, she remarked, seemed scouring the many possible interpretations his imagination brought up as to the riddle of the papers. Visiting each floor he peered down the empty hallways expecting the sight of other employees or company staffers, but finding no one.

Returning to his office, a volume of Augustine sat open upon a stand and he fanned the pages distractedly. At a window his eyes looked out over the silent city, in those dark orbs the distant sun was reflected, lingering above the horizon like a sea of crimson waters lapping at its shores. Whole blocks razed to the ground spread out from a distant epicenter until the haggard skeletons of half blown-out edifices arose from streets strewn with concrete mangled in rebar. A forlorn skyline littered with the rubble of a world that no longer remained. Several figures were seen in the square in front of the building and Sam watched them below as they approached the lobby doors to mark the front of the building with a series of red painted symbols suggesting signs used by the demolition industry in cities felled by the hand of war. All appeared a deserted wasteland, a sight which moved Samuel with not the least remorse, a response that troubled his conscience more than the terrible sights his eyes beheld. Three inter-connecting rings, representing the flower of life occupied the plaza in front of the building as an ornamental artwork and fountain, were seen now littered with the detritus of over-grown reeds and vagrant foliage. In the grime that covered the window, Samuel traced its form with his finger. Then, remembering an editor's place in the world, he made to rub it out again, only to be distracted by the ring of a telephone.



NIGHT IN PURGATORY –

As we entered the city along the southern route of Central Avenue, we were met with the eeriest sound, the silence one is more accustomed to hear in a secluded forest than in the middle of a once crowded and bustling metropolis. All about the great teacher, silence, lonely and meditative fed our minds with strange beauty. The sight of over-turned cars littered the roadway like dead and egoless hulks; the shop windows either boarded still or broken out by long forgotten and desperate survivors, were strange reminders of a long faded terror. Coming upon a row of shops it appeared looting evidently was not a concern of those last citizens of the great event, as in the stores we discovered the well-stocked inventories of many expensive items: appliances, furniture, televisions of a make and model not seen for many years now in the East. Here, these items remained intact and well-preserved like pristine artifacts found at some ancient archeological site, goods no longer deemed useful in this land turned over again to nature. Noting their admirable display, one was reminded of the once universal and jealous value which people had levied upon them in years past. Yet, one wondered, if those items had before been better considered, how these now worthless concerns might have made living more worthwhile for the doomed citizens of the city.

It was not unknown that a very few intrepid survivors had successfully made it out alive and to have reached the East by the check-points set up after the event. But here, as my companions and I made our way into the great and silent metropolis, we discovered many unmistakable signs that a select number had indeed weathered the furious event and lingered-on within the city for at least a while in its aftermath. Upon a great billboard was writ in large characters

the words: "Welcome to Purgatory. Population: 23". A tally which was systematically reduced, by an unknown hand, to 21, then 17, 12, 8, 4, and finally left as is.

Upon the hood of a rusted out vehicle I spread out a map of the city and took our bearings.

"According to the map we are here," I said, pointing my finger to the intersection of Central and Wilshire.

"OK, then," said another, tracing the faded lines of the chart. "If we take this route here, we can reach the downtown area by nightfall. The sun is now in its descent so the hours will pass quickly; no need to further explore what's not needed. At night the wolves will be out in number. We'll need to make good time, if we are to make it there safely."

Changing course, we headed up Wilshire Avenue, turning left at the remnants of an old interstate where we made our way across the dilapidated overpasses well-covered now with the weedy dispersal of mutant overgrowth. Towards the center of the city, a hulking, denuded epicenter marred by ragged spires and scraggly skeletons of devastated office-buildings and towers, met our gaze with terrible wonder. Turning right again we made our way up Pennsylvania Avenue. Passing the site of what once was a city park, we caught sight of an unusual habit seen in many of the surviving homes of the forbidden zone. In a great clearing, an enormous mountain of furniture was found stacked neatly together until it reached a hundred feet or more into the air. Curiosity morbidly beckoned us to inspect its construction more closely and we found it consisting entirely of the random examples of office desks and chairs common to the era. A great tower of Babel composed of rusted tubing, swollen particle board, and faux-wooden laminate, it's torn and weathered upholstery seen flapping gently in the breeze like haggard and motley

pennants. All of this, rising towards a dizzying summit, upon which the broken screen of a large television perched, peering grey and blindly out into the distant West. The phenomenon of stacking was a common thing in the aftermath of the event, but one consistently found only on the interior of dwellings, and this was the first time any of us had encountered it out of doors. Someone took a series of photographs and a quick measure of its circumference before we continued along our way. – The signs of wolves, which were known to habit the cities of Purgatory were seen in evidence littered abundantly about the grounds of the curious monument.

In the downtown district we found our way through the rubble-strewn streets to the publishing district. At a plaza, the statue of Noah Webster we had been told of was found still perched atop its pedestal, streaked black now with the course of the elements. As per our instructions we followed the old lexicographer's stony gaze and found the building we had set out for some six months previously: the Merriam House, home of several publishers, but most importantly that of Moonlight Books.

The building, we found, had bore the storm of the event rather well, considering; it stood buffered on three sides by a series of greater constructions that seemed to have sheltered it from the overwhelming force of the event. Approaching it, my companions and I found the waterworks of three intersecting circles, which we had been told were the esoteric sign of the flower of life, overgrown now with the accumulations of many years reed growth. Each of us knew the symbol well as it had since become the universal sign of the Commission; a figure which was now in the East appearing everywhere from graffiti to tattoos, holiday ornaments, even the stained-glass windows of libraries and instructional schools. Standing before this

great and hopeful symbol, we each felt the relief of a long journey approaching its resolution. But what happened that night, in the offices of Moonlight Books, none of us had prepared for.

As we stood, surveying the weathered edifice, we saw from one of its windows a light suddenly appear and a movement was seen by all of us. Skeptical at first, and understanding the city to be entirely uninhabited, we put the sighting off to the possible reflections of the setting sun or the flight of a blackbird perhaps passing furtively before the glass. One of us approached the buildings façade and made the mark as we were instructed to do when we began our mission.

As night began to fall we found our way inside the building. The air blew breezily through the vacant, musty corridors. The first three floors were found without a sign of furniture or habitation, only vagrant papers were seen strewn about or piled up in a central location as was the tradition of stacking furniture. Here too, the signs of wolves were unmistakable. Ascending to the fifth floor we found the publishing offices we had sought and made our accommodations in a series of empty rooms. The window from which the light was seen we found looking out over the plaza below, the statue of Noah Webster standing sentinel in the distance. The room stood empty except upon the dusty glass three intersecting circles had been drawn by an unknown finger. We questioned if a member of the Commission had previously visited the sight, or if the sign was simply a representation of the figure found below in the plaza. Someone noted the figure seemed fresh and without any further accumulation of grime or dust within the trace of the circles, but we elected to pass it off as a coincidence, deciding now to begin our investigation of the vaults of Moonlight Books.

After a simple meal was prepared and hastily eaten, we

each were assigned an area to search out the place for what we had been sent. – It is said that the longest journey is the journey inward, and as I look back upon it now, it seems almost impossible that impatience was the thing that implored us, or any other people in search of something in this or any other quest. For we each realized that evening, that Time was no more an issue to the living than it was to the dead.

The darkness that engulfed the city that night, we soon discovered, was not the impenetrable prison which we had been led to believe, nor the silence a forlorn vacancy of life. As the wolves gathered outside in the plaza below, something throughout the city awakened; the moon appeared in the sky and shone down upon everything a wan glimmering light which grew into a spectral luminescence transforming the whole of the city into something we could not believe. As they milled about below in the silver half-light, those dark creatures which formerly tread on all-fours suddenly transmogrified and stood upon two legs, strolling civilly amongst the spectacle of the city returning again to its model state. We each questioned our minds when the sight of those spectral hounds were seen morphing into the figures of men and women behaving in a completely human manner. No longer were the wolves a treacherous bane of beastly creatures, but to our disbelief they became a throng of average people, the very citizens of the city come alive and going about their daily routine. Secretaries were seen filing into the buildings, pedestrians and workers strode up and down the streets all with regular intention. Rising slowly throughout the offices the humming sounds of business machines could be heard and the smells of food and people filled the air. Death, it seemed in Purgatory, was a living thing, at one with the whole place and time, well and oblivious to all the destruction that had and would still

chance to come.

In amazement we together watched as spectral light engulfed the darkness. The door to the office in which we were stationed suddenly opened and a young man entered taking no notice of our presence. Furniture appeared as it must once have been and he took his seat at a desk, opening a morning newspaper; a cup of coffee steamed a rich and inviting scent we each could smell. After a time, someone entered and enquired of him and the two left out together.

That whole night, my companions and I quietly watched an entire routine of ordinary office work play out with the commonest regularity. Exhausted though we were, it was impossible to rest amongst the active goings-on. Not a single acknowledgement did any of our movements attract the entire time as the ghosts of the cities' past lived out the hours, unsuspectingly. The experience was without a single scientific precedence, and so we each filled our journals with the copious notes that such a witness might warrant.

That night we left off our search in observation of the office staff. Initially, our journey had planned to retrieve from the vaults of the publisher a particular manuscript by a man named Arthur Ceregate who had reportedly presaged the event by writing of it in a cryptic novel. Brief mention was heard spoke amongst the staff concerning the work which we'd been sent for and as the hours passed and the workers eventually left the building towards sunrise, we increased our search for the commissioned production. Several times curious papers were found which distracted our attention, and some of us set collections of these aside for further assessment. In one office I found a collection of Romantic fragments sent in from the city of Nuremberg, attributed in a foreword to an obscure member of the House of Baden. Strange and beautiful were the eclectic musings. As I shuffled through the now yellowing pages I came

across these cryptic lines, which rang eerily familiar:

"The memory also contains the innumerable principles and laws of numbers and dimensions."

The phrase held a curious weight to it and so I decided that the papers should accompany some others on our return. One of us had admitted to an ancestor having been published long ago by the press of Moonlight Books, a retelling of The Pearl poem, it was said, by the enigmatic Middle-English author of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. The similarity of this jived conspicuously with the curious fragment I had just read and turned over and over in my tiring mind. Lack of sleep often dulled our efforts to find the wanted draft, and the search was regularly delayed as many another unnecessary discovery was called out amid the search. As the day unfolded we amassed a fair collection of the types of work the publisher was in the habit of producing, – works which challenged the notion of the intelligible world so safely believed in.

"I know the name of God," read aloud one of us from one of these manuscripts. *"It has not the 216 letters or numbers which the learned say it does. But only two, and is pronounced Id, in the common parlance of our Time."*

Exhaustedly, we scoured the files and offices for the mysterious manuscript, finding it finally locked inside an editor's desk. My experience as a locksmith enabled me to easily free the lock that kept it. But of the novel itself none of us could ferret out any evidence of its significance or presage. Consisting only of a few philosophical poems and a strange concoction of story and fragments, it resembled more the half-drawn ideas of a searching-out for understanding than the discreet answers we had hoped for. "Sometimes the questions are more important than the answers," one of us finally admitted. And so we took what we were originally commissioned to find, packing it safely

away in a tubular container brought especially for it.

As much as we had wanted to stay and further investigate the mysterious offices and its secrets, we knew we could remain no longer. Our supplies, already severely depleted when we arrived in the city, were quickly running out and as the journey now seemed more of one into ourselves than toward some specific destination, we decided to begin the return home almost immediately.

After a brief respite we set out towards the East and the comforts of our friends and family. The city in daylight assumed again the state of destruction which we had found when we arrived. Amongst the old reeds of the waterworks a flock of blackbirds had gathered and seemed to mock our departure.

Nobody spoke much of what it was we had witnessed in the city after the moon had ascended the night sky. Each one of us suddenly realized that the meager supplies that we had carried along in our backpacks were not nearly sufficient to have lasted the six months journey we had made together through Purgatory. It was this that was most immediately on my own mind, and not necessarily the ghostly offices of Moonlight Books, or the mysterious wolves that comprised its employees. – Who was the living and who were the ghosts? This was what indelibly knotted each one of our individual imaginations. The wind blew airily in the mind the various images of our travels.

As we approached again the bizarre monument in the park, its mighty tower of furniture could be seen rising high above the treetops. And like a lazy beacon, dulled by weather and time, the morning sun, shining above, reflected in the broken glass of the television screen which commanded the perilous heights of its summit.



IN RUINS –

“Whence things have their origin, there they must also pass away according to necessity; for they must pay penalty and be judged for their injustice, according to the ordinance of time.”

– Anaximander

After several weeks journey we found ourselves upon a vast promontory which commanded a view of a great valley where the ruins of a once proud and stately metropolis were to be found. On approach the Doctor found first its main gate and then the remains of its several walls built and destroyed again by the various waves of incursion and time. Employing the few of us that remained, he set up an impromptu archeological dig to ferret out the mysteries that could be gathered from the place.

With a little effort the design of the complex constellated out of the chaos of rubble and ruin and took on the likeness of an ancient community, just as the stars above had once seen their random displacement marshaled into patterns recognized by any human experience. A place where the origins of much knowledge likely took form.

The Doctor described the remains of its various structures and their functions. To the left appeared the remnants of a once proud and excellent library whose “walls had ensconced the repository of learning and discovery that was the hallmark of the site in its time.”

Further along the ascending features of a small theatre were found hewn from the stone of a hillside. “Oratory and drama”, the Doctor related, “here portrayed the novelties of experience and discovery synthesized into form and structure which an audience could enjoy and personify.”

The theatre and library provided the community with its surest ideas and concepts; places where nature could be

assayed peacefully in all its order.

“Yet, this is where, too, the demise of the community was first engendered; for the people here had not a myth nor priesthood to discriminate what should be held true apart from the many things that could be learnt.

From the scant evidence that remained, the Doctor pieced together a likely plot for the fate of its long forgotten inhabitants. “Simple idleness amongst these fellows became their habit. After several generations of advancement, nature no longer held its citizens to the predicable laws that bind men together. The humane art of solitude must then have dispersed the lot of them to follow each his own particular and lonely way; abandoning, somewhere along, this place as well, in order to seek their deaths elsewhere.”

As our labors gave up the final mysteries of the place, the air swirled about the fallow grounds. Grains of sand blew restless and diffusing, dismantling now the last of the several remaining structures until in time no semblance of them would be discerned.

The Doctor turned then his gaze to the lofty darkness settling over the site and, tracing in the sky with an aged finger, he detailed the vast concerns of the twinkling stars as they appeared above.



CROSS CURRENTS –

Caught in the cross-currents –
men of all complicated example / like sand castles
ever-varying. –
Infinitesimal: every slight silent clarity they subjugate.

(Smell of tobacco / musk of thirty wolves.)

What I miss in their detail the retreating tides will soon reveal.

Bathed in the white lunations of a dream
sleepers swine and rut / suffer perfect war /
obliged not to fight – that one should not fight a losing battle.

To the west the north and the south
the mystics are disintegrating / scattered with the dust
of eastern winds – where idling engines imbued with cold
unsleeping hum in the dark between / in the limbo between
the corners of the world.

(I am now a grandmother / a fore-knowing.)

Wheels, hubs and shafts labor forward upon simple principles:
consign our dust to the Lord.

In the breaks great white horses come up
to lick the froth of the foam that wild winds ride.
Then disperse
into a cover of hands / like merchants of the Absolute –
to lay impelled and broken upon the beach
bristling like flies.



SHADOWS –

“A scattering of images are all that are necessary to prove to us that we are lost in another world where we must revise our usual powers of sight and mind,” cited the Avatar, resting upon his lap a copy of *Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*. “The first visions we see are those of another world being glimpsed through the disappearing images of the familiar world.”

Outside the sounds of children passed below like the quick novelties of sunshine and the Avatar approached the window to watch the spectacle of play.

“The Last Philosopher rises,” he continued solemnly, “a silhouette passing ghostly upon the vanishing walls of the cave, discovering himself now in the great and open wonder of insight. He is alone. His shadow stretching far to the horizon. And over his shoulder the stirring wind scatters in the leaves like fingers running through the mind, massaging the Word with gentle manipulation. Knowledge draws him with symbols and bemusement. Venturing out no map serves the way for such an escape, nature abhors all such rebelliousness, as it is neither instinctual nor biological, but intuitive and egoless, therefore it is a dangerous way to find oneself. Strange cities and peoples appear and disappear again, proud, corrupted, rich and vast, having as they do the expansion of infinity. And in the distant rumblings which draw him from away from his home, he finds that *the closer a man gets to the source of how the definite falls from the indefinite, the ephemeral from the eternal, the unjust from the just, the deeper grows the night.*”



JOURNEY'S END –

Inside the heuristics lab the technicians poured over the data, scouring page after page of computer read-outs for hidden secrets of the anomaly. The subject, who they were now calling the Avatar, leaned back in a chair in an adjoining room taking questions from the director and lead investigator.

“Yes,” the Avatar conferred, taking into his hand a large red apple and biting into it. “What you here in the lab might have experienced as only a few moments in time was for me, subjected to the void, a journey through many centuries past and future.”

“And you aged not, through the entire ordeal and avoided death at every turn?” the director questioned.

“I aged not a day, or possibly just as much as I might have those few moments you per chance did here. Not once did I ever need a shave, a meal or even sleep the entire duration of my experience, remaining in my person within a state of ageless suspension, somehow still contingent upon the condition of only those moments absent from the now which you experienced in the lab.”

“So, it is not unreasonable, you understand, for our doubt,” continued the lead investigator.

“Without question,” the Avatar concurred, tossing the core of the apple into a waste paper basket. “But what I have described to you is exactly what I experienced. It will take the rest of my life to relate to you what all that I have seen with my own eyes. Those years, those centuries, were as real to me as your own life has been to you. Do you want to hear me speak in Attic Greek, which you know I had no knowledge of before? Or Medieval Persian? Or Middle English? Call in your most learned linguists and I will teach them the aboriginal Indo-European tongue which they have

only the vaguest theories of. Assemble a team of the best archeologists, I know where now to dig up the most wonderful hidden mysteries. I have so much to show you.”

“I’m sure we will... But, first things first. So, where did you initially find yourself after you first emerged from the void?” asked the director of the Avatar.

“I found myself initially right here; at this very geographical location, only some three thousand years previous; this area being then a marshy glade, populated very sparsely by Neolithic peoples, primitive but very tame and generous. There were practitioners of the ancient druidic arts and amongst their pilgrims I visited all the sacred sights of ancient Britannia. From them I learned the most ancient secrets attributed to the builders of Stonehenge and what I will tell you of it will rewrite all the history books about their theories of astronomy.

From Britannia I traveled across the channel to the continent and made my way towards Greece; living and traveling along the most ancient trade routes, lending just enough aid to the aboriginals as would ensure my comfort and means while not corrupting their technology with my knowledge as I felt was prudent to do.”

“And never once without aging or need of sleep or food?” enquired the lead investigator. “It was as if your physical being changed not at all? Surely this was most unusual.”

“Living for many years without need of sleep or food was sure to raise suspicion,” continued the Avatar, “and so I maintained a very secretive existence. However, it was a situation that could never remain above some degree of apprehension amongst certain circles and offices. My movements were often and varied, sometimes trailed by suspicion, certainly, but I moved always with the idea of putting myself in places where the greatest advantage to history was to be made.”

“You say you visited Greece. Were you there in Athens at the trial of Socrates?” asked the director.

“I was there, for I knew him very well while I lived in Athens. The bust of Socrates you see in the Vatican museum is a perfect likeness, however without the smells and humor. He was the most brilliant conversationalist. His Apology before the jury is very much as Plato has related; I can tell you even more on the trial than that, if you wish, being as I was amongst his inner-circle. His character is perhaps the highest of any personage I had ever met on my journey, and his snoring some of the loudest still I can assure you. He was a very brave man whose example was without peer.”

“And of Plato?” injected the lead investigator.

“He was very young at the time of the trial, then a very able poet and idealist, his memories of Socrates were very good in his best years. However as he reached his elder years something changed him; the time spent in Syracuse marring his thought with a cold outlook very unlike him. When I again made his acquaintance he thought his mind had failed him and I had to assure him that I was the grandson of the friend he had known in his youth. For a while, in my company, the old Plato would sometimes liven within him; but what it was that changed him in his old age even I can only hypothesize upon. However, if it is further dialogues with the great sage you are desiring I can give you many, as my memories of Socrates are some of the fondest and most vivid that I possess.”

“And from Greece I assume you traveled to Rome and witnessed the rise of Caesar,” continued the director.

“Certainly,” the Avatar agreed. “Not a better general or more charismatic statesman did the Republic ever produce. Despite his, initially, selfish ambitions, a great change in his attitudes was immanent before his death. In Rome they

knew me as a soothsayer and I could not but help to try and warn him of his doom, but he was too trusting of his fellows and history could not be changed. That is one thing I soon found out; no matter if indeed I tried to sway history it would develop as it would have anyway without any variance at all. So don't even consider trying to send another through to do so, it is simply not possible."

"Did you travel to Judea and witness the persecution of Christ?" asked the lead investigator.

"In Judea I witnessed the persecution of a man whose death would later be transformed into the story of Jesus I can say that; but no man of Jesus' character ever existed amongst the Hebrews as the Bible so describes. Although the antecedents to the stories are numerous, those times were plagued by so much strife and manipulations amongst those people; the work of the following centuries that developed the story of Jesus was carried out by the most unbelievable of persons that I am very reluctant to tell of such a thing."

"Your journey has been an amazing one," conceded the director with soft aplomb. "However, it is imperative that you be forthwith with us concerning what you know; the future, and its correct interpretation of the insights that the past may provide us, will be contingent upon you doing so, I hope you understand this."

"I do," the Avatar agreed. "In my reports to you I will not waiver from the whole truth. However, that time will come; I have had many years to prepare my statements on the many inquiries which I have long known you would have. Remember, I have seen, too, much of the future that has developed from this point forward, I want you to understand this also."

"The future?" asked the lead investigator.

"Yes, the future as well," concurred the Avatar. "I have seen almost four millennia of history. Three thousand years

of the past and almost a full thousand years yet to come. I have lived through the present and beyond it as well. I even dared to meet you in your youth. Do you remember as a child in Washington a teacher of mathematics who taught you the first principles of Pythagoras, Mr. Director?"

"Are implying that that was you?" the director queried.

"It was I indeed," admitted the Avatar. "I remember you as a nervous little boy with a stutter and such crooked teeth you were afraid to say a word."

"My God! I do remember you now!" the director guffawed. The Avatar chuckled knowingly and ran his fingers through his hair assuming the vision of a teacher the director had known many years previously.

"And of the future," continued the lead investigator. "I hope you will be equally forthcoming."

"That I will not," replied the Avatar. "For as I have seen: if I could not change the past with my foreknowledge of it, likewise my understanding of the future cannot change it as well, but only add to the despair of intelligent men. A man's knowledge is never enough to persuade the masses of people who have their own varying conceptions of destiny. No matter how much truth be told, people are wont to think as they wish and will follow what truth or untruth they please, whatever it may be so long as it serves their ego. The one universal in all of human history, that I have seen, is that the ego is always stronger than the will of truth, that much I'm sure is self-evident. Certain organizations know of me and have tracked me for some time. I am the first and the last of my kind. For even as we speak, Mr. Director, there are men working, as they have been for many centuries now, to discover my identity and to silence what it is that I will tell you."



LEVIATHAN –

“And departing thence, I passed on through many a city and many a town towards the east, until I came upon that noble city...”

– Friar Odoric

The last of his kind sat huddled near the fire and stoked the coals with an iron poker. Outside the winter wind blew through the barren trees of the orchard and whistled down the flue, its shrill voice articulating vague memories that washed upon the deserted shores of his imagination. At one end of this diffusing body a figure appeared out of the darkness and approached the dancing flame, passing from the ebb of shadows and into the wan light of the room.

The last of his kind welcomed the visitor with the familiarity of old acquaintance and the two began to talk, spinning strange tales from lonely hours.

“You really think you can make a sailor kid, you’re white as a lily again,” spoke a grizzled old voice.

“No whiter than you old man,” the kid replied jokingly. “I thought you had departed for the grateful dead.”

“I’m feeling better now as you see. My scruples return to me now and flow free as a cleaving from a prow.”

“That’s good, old timer, I was hoping you’d tell me more stories of the sea, that is if you’re feeling up to it,” the kid cajoled. “I once heard spoke of the pirate Ionaç being swallowed by a whale.”

“Aye, I knew Ionaç but he weren’t no pirate as you call him,” the old sailor proclaimed with a rumble in his lungs.

“He was a good Captain, Ionaç; I owed much to him in my youth.”

“I’m sorry,” the kid replied. “So, you know the story?”

As the coals of the fire raised their furies, the last of his kind searched into its crucible for memory and speculation.

“The reflection of the sun upon the water contains in its brief glimmer a thousand of those forgotten faces,” he began. “Turning now into the golden hours, I do not ask for the forgiveness of my sins on earth, they are the only relation I have held to the present in the maw of my existence.

“Secreted away on the straits of Hormuz, the Whale ruminates on all legends and myths. As does the great Leviathan haunt the depths of the oceans, there is it’s like a stone Leviathan of a prison, built long ago for those whom the gods had wished forgotten. No trace, nor memory, nor rumor left in those ever-moving sands spoke again of so many souls the Whale devoured there upon a vast and inward sea. ‘*A journey to the end of the page,*’ as one judge has put it. ‘*Where a body’s sentence can feed God its time.*’ All those in the fo’c’sle grew still and silent, fading into the recesses of its shadows as the old man drew out his tale.

“The condemned therein are, variously, the offenders of faith, pride, and life but, as is most often, they are the offenders of material wealth. No matter. Here offence is met with complete oblivion. –

“After all that you have seen in your young life, I ask you my friend: Between death and hell, which of these travels to, and returns from the more remote of regions?”

“There are none who tell,” the kid answered all the while knowing: “As none were known to survive this prison, surely, all hope was forever abandoned by he who entered the Whale.”

“One morning,” the old sailor continued, “those asleep in the guardhouse awoke expecting that day a contingency from Abbas. It was always the strangest sight to witness those prisoners arriving from across the desert with sacks over their heads and in-burdened like a team of pack animals weighed down with goods for the prison.

“Boxes of irons and supplies, food and the various indulgences of the guards, the implements of interrogation and reprobation, these they carried over leagues of burning sand.

“Half dead from the journey, six prisoners are unloaded and made to stand at attention.”

“You are late!” the guard bellows as the men tighten themselves like planks of lumber banded into a rigid mast. – Here is Ionaç and those whom the lords in Babylon deplore. One-eared soldiers and swindlers of royal trusts.

“The sun beat upon them in sinking waves of tortuous heat as those vicious and vengeful guards beat and harangued the crew with jeers of hate and petulance; a violence which blew their wizened craft only further and further into the white and shining sun. –

“As the grateful dead did drive upon the Nile the soul of their mythic king so too will you deliver yours to the bowels of the Whale,” cried the jailers at the ragged men.

“But their timbre was much stronger than that foul gale the guards were blowing,” the old sailor recounted, withdrawing deeper now into himself, his eyes becoming dark as a blackbird revealing itself in the glow of the fire.

“When night fell they were led, chained like some terrible galloon, into the bowels of the prison and deposited into a tiny cell the size of a closet where they were at last allowed to sleep, standing up.”

“In this position they were interrogated at length; battered with storms of remonstrance and rebuttal by a rotating team of inquisitors, until each berated man’s tale became that of his brothers; undifferentiated, each without a self and without the derivation of complexion or character; an instrument of their master’s vile constraint. – *‘The deeds against those whom the gods favor, is a deed against the gods themselves’*,” the old man revealed without an air of

searching deliberation, as if he were not in the here and now but somehow there reliving the cruel events of those years before.

Outside the winter cabin, the flutter of crows alighting in the orchard brought to the ear the vague murmur of the ocean's waves turning over and over a fathomless abyss. – The kid fetched a cup from the rafters and folded the old man's haggard fingers around it. Draining the cup the old man slaked his thirst and peered deeply into its draught. The beams of the ceiling and the planks of wooden floor creaked with the sounds of a pitching ship held hard upon a cruel sea.

“As the guards removed themselves to the luxuries of their towers the crew was stored in abominable seclusion like so many brooms in a closet, their minds swept bare and clean. After time a small window in the door was opened; water and hardtack passed through. Enough for one is eaten by six.

“Many days passed in this way until, upon the brink of death, they were given each a separate cell, just so much bigger than the one previously held by six. Here they were held scuttled away in the consignment of squalor and all indifference like shadows upon the walls of that vulgar prison cavern. But they remained, and in that inexpressible and infernal night the six of them became as one in will and movement of breath.”

At once the kid felt a great loneliness well up within him and dance within his frame like a tallow flame held before an intractable wind. Somewhere along the bale horizon, amongst the solitary cleavings of woeful wings, an ancient mystery revealed itself from the timorous hold of infinite sands and time knew no current, excepting the unfathomable cadence of the inimitable words that unfurled from the lips of the old and feeble mariner.

“For in the belly of the Whale, each cell assumes the state of an archipelago, as each man stored therein becomes an island in the White Sea where the great Leviathan swims. *In all this brightness it is as if there were no sin present...* For each cell formed the backbone of a man being dreamed in the strife of Time and the gods forgetting.”



A MIRACLE –

“It could not be a more disadvantageous proposition,” stated Nicholas from across the table. “The Council has irreversibly ruled against them so they know how their days are numbered. To buy them a drink now in memorial to their fallen cause, I think, would not be a sin.”

“The Bishop of Rome sure knows how to throw his weight around,” his companion added. “The whole city of Nicaea practically scurries about to attend to all his demands. His political power dwarfs that of the Bishops of Antioch and Alexandria put together. The way he kisses the Emperor’s ass, it appears now that our vain pontiff from Rome will be the principle office of the entire faith.”

“I’m sure you’re right, for the moment at least... Well, my, my; look who just walked in the door,” observed Nicholas as his companion craned his neck around to see.

From across the tavern hall a group of Arians approach the table.

“So, how does it feel?” inquired Nicholas of James, chief amongst them, who was sporting now a lurid shiner on his right eye.

“It feels good,” he responded. “It will remind me of how a true politician for the Lord levies his reason.”

“You do that, if it pleases,” the corpuscular Bishop

Nicholas of Myra responded. "But it would please me more if you'd sit and have a drink with us. I mean you no hard feelings."

"It would be an honor, sir," James agreed and pulled up a chair. "Your generosity is legendary as well as your left hook."

Nicholas beckoned the keeper for another round.

"Now that the council has settled the case once and for all, I will say this only in confidence: your arguments were very well proposed and supported for the better part by absolute good reason," began Nicholas, as a girl delivered their drinks. "But the Emperor and his Bishop are much too powerful for even I to contradict. My show of force was regrettable. But, politics today pushes the hand and sways the heart that wishes more to keep beating and feeling its way towards Heaven; I hope you can see your way to realize this."

"It is quite evident," James concurred, running a cube of ice under his swollen eye.

"Those scriptures that you cite are, perhaps, more than reasonable; they probably even convey more actual truth than your opponents wish to admit. They are, however, not those with which the true Lord wishes to portray our faith. The outcome of today's decision is evidence of that."

"I may beg to differ," countered James, leaning back in his chair. "The politics of men and the will of the Lord are not consubstantial with one another. I'd imagine if given the opportunity to pick and choose, the Lord Himself might agree more with those apocryphal scriptures that your allies discount than those it proposes to be His truest Word."

"Perhaps you speak a truth. There must be a means, then, to discern such favor, I'm sure," said Nicholas, tracing the rim of his cup with a mindful finger.

"Certainly, there is."

“And how is that?” asked Nicholas.

“In the great hall there are the collected testaments and scriptures of our Redeemer. Let’s say we pray a miracle be the decider of those works which He agrees may make the honest canon of our Lord. We are here in Nicaea with the very best of audiences, why not let this be the venue to settle the matter.”

“The canon is not an issue of this council. Any discourse that might concern it must be held for another date,” reminded Nicholas of the young Arian.

“I wish not to debate the issue at all,” he began. “But I call for a miracle of the Lord Himself to decide it. If upon a table in the great hall we set all the known works concerning our Lord, and call upon Him to decide, those that remain as so in the morning we will know are the true Gospel and those that do not we will discard to posterity once and for all.”

“Aye, it is a matter which only He may decide,” agreed Nicholas. “Let us indeed pray the true Lord choose the matter. And in this room, remaining locked and guarded until morning, the Lord, I pray, will intervene and do His choosing. Is this your proposition?”

“Indeed it is,” answered James.

“Unofficially, of course,” added Nicholas. “We would not want to give the impression that we are usurping the authority of the Emperor or the father Bishop of Rome.”

“Unofficially, sure” agreed James. “But not without the implicit favor of the good Lord, who will be making the decision Himself after all, you understand.”

“Quite certainly,” Nicholas concurred and raising his cup proposed a toast to the miracle of the idea.

After several more drinks, the group of them then found their way again to the great hall that was now vacant of the heady and illustrious council that had occupied it in debate

for the past several weeks. At the center of the room a great table held the entire known collection of the true, and the spurious scriptures of the Redeemer Jesus of Nazareth, some two-hundred volumes in all. These included the testaments of Matthew, Mark, Paul, Thomas and Mary; the Traditions of Matthias; the Acts; the Gospel of Thunder and the Gospel of Truth; along with the Exegetica of Basilides and the earlier Christos Oratoria, amongst many others.

Nicholas, surveying the hall for any hidden person or entrance approached a massive hearth that serviced the hall and appraised its considerable breadth. "The hall will be guarded at the door by an impartial party, I take it. The handles bound and insured with both rope and seal to be kept and proven unmolested."

"Of course," the Arian complied. "Every measure must be taken to provide authenticity to the miracle. The righteous and true disposition of Christ can only be persuaded if the correct testimonies on Him are allowed to guide His faithful. And, if the Lord is willing to aid the resolution of our dispute, those works which remain upon the table by morning we will know to hold canonical truth, while those that He discards shall be forever anathema throughout all of Christendom, am I correct?"

"So let it be," agreed Nicholas and the group of them together left the hall and retired to their lodgings for the evening.

In the morning, they all gathered again at the doors to the great hall. They greeted the guards who presented to them an intact seal, proof that the doors had not been passed the night before. Once inside they found a very curious sight: engulfing the table was discovered a great elevation of chairs and various furniture stacked neatly together in a most perplexing manner. In a pyramidal structure, the

chairs and things stretched high towards the ceiling, its paramount dizzyingly positioned with skillful precision; upon which sat the selected canon of scripture very plainly for all to see.

“It is a miracle,” exclaimed one from the group.

“Its peculiarity can only be proof that it is indeed,” agreed another, who from the floor picked up a discarded volume of Apocrypha and leafed through its pages before depositing it secretly away. All around the discarded texts were strewn pell-mell and without regard upon the floor. “It appears the miracle of the Lord has chosen a canon which none can any longer doubt.”

“It is a wise and Godly affirmation,” concluded Nicholas, thrusting both his hands with their soot-stained fingernails, unseen, deeply inside his pockets.



THE WHITE FATHER –

The Doctor had been commissioned that year by The Texas Oil Co. to assess the Putumayo for possible drilling enterprises in the region. He was happy at last to have gained such sufficient funding that he may also pursue his own anthropological studies deeper into the rainforest.

While surveying the area’s many geological properties, the Doctor established contact with several isolated tribes, and on that summer mission of 1948, the Doctor made an assistant or, protégé if you will, in the figure of an Ashanka tribesman whom he called Franz.

The youngest son of a tribal chief, Franz had been exiled from his people for heresy and had taken to the Doctor, first as translator and then as servant, insisting upon disposing himself to his superior’s every need. The Doctor took great

pride in the rapid reprobation of this once course savage into a thoughtful man of reason and science. He found a fatherly pleasure in the calm nature of Franz's burgeoning sensibilities. Very little, the Doctor thought, differed in the abilities of Franz from the diligent students he was accustomed to working with in more academic settings. Many times the Doctor relied on the rare knowledge Franz possessed of the frightening customs of the indigenous peoples of the forest, detailing often in these opportunities a complex, aboriginal religion. After several such contacts and interviews the Doctor would seize upon a chance to enquire into the nature of Franz's own heresy, only however, to be met with obfuscation and avoidance of the question time and time again. "I cannot plead the unreasonable," was always the only answer he offered.

The Doctor had begun making arrangements to take Franz with him when he left the Putomayo and returned again to the States. With great admiration, Franz had even took to calling him his "White Father".

At times however, Franz would disappear into the forest late at night and be gone until morning, arriving back at the Doctors camp wearing not the occidental clothes he now donned in the day, but attired in the jungle garb native to his people, his face and shoulders painted red with ocher.

One afternoon the Doctor enquired with his assistant on what it was he did on these nocturnal excursions of his.

"It is to speak with my brother on matters concerning my people," said Franz.

"And what does your brother tell you, if I may ask?"

"He tells me that my people are preparing for the coming of the great Messiah. He has sent a sign that has foretold of His intentions for our people."

"Do you believe too that their Messiah is coming?"

"I have not seen His sign, but several people in my village

say they have. His arrival has been spoken of for ages and we all have been awaiting Him. Now it seems that He will come at last. It has been agreed upon that I may return to my people and witness His arrival."

"May I accompany you as you return to your people?" asked the Doctor of his protégé.

"Surely," he replied. "But we will have to leave this evening. Tomorrow is said to be the day of His coming."

That night the Doctor and Franz embarked through the jungle umbrage in search of the coming Messiah. At a river a small canoe awaited them which carried the two downstream for many miles. As the river coursed through the darkness the Doctor could feel the centuries pass beneath the cleavage of the narrow prow, delivering the two into the impenetrable past.

They arrived in the dead of night very near to the Ashanka village of his father. Here Franz insisted they remain until day-break, confiding to the Doctor that this was the mysterious site where the messenger of the Messiah was said to appear. In the soft, warm sands the Doctor laid himself down amongst the dreams of the forest umber and fell quickly asleep, exhausted from the stress of the long nights journey.

After a few hours the Doctor was awakened by the sounds of women and children crying aloud with excitement. Alarmed, he made quickly to rise to see what brought such calamity only to have Franz pull him back again so as to observe the encounter in hiding. Across the river a group of Ashanka stood waiving their arms in the dawn air, signaling to what appeared to be a company helicopter of the Texas Oil Co. as it flew nearby. Frightened tears rolled down the faces of those he saw, the women tearing at their meager garments with ecstatic hands. Above them the men of the village gathered nervously together arguing amongst

themselves on what it was they had just seen moving through the confused morning sky.

Sensing their terror could easily be brought upon himself, the Doctor tried to scurry away through the underbrush when at that moment the strong right arm of Franz' reached down and brought him up beside himself. His pale visage and sterling hair sending a cold shiver through the fevered blood of the Ashanka women who gasped and shrieked as their exiled Franz paraded before them in the presence of the great "White Father." In their excited witness they fell to their knees in an attitude of supplication, kissing the earth where the prophecy had made itself manifest.

Stupefied in the horror, the Doctor stood upon the river-bank as the men of the village descended too in wonder to meet the great Messiah. Franz's father was chief among them and signaled to his son from across the river.

At this point Franz produced from his clothing a blade fashioned from the sharpest obsidian and took the Doctor's head in his arms, exposing the white, soft neck which soon ran crimson with the blood of the Messiah.



THE FOLIO –

“Under no circumstances are these papers to be made public until after my death,” the Doctor prescribed as he sealed the folio and handed it over to me. He was trembling less now amongst the old assurances of his study walls.

“I ensure you, your wishes will be honored by me,” I told him.

“I am very tired, my friend. I have not the strength to debate the matters of my methods in these pages. Some were written long ago. In my youth I had no reason to justify myself.”

“Surely, there are none who would demand as much from you,” I prevaricated, measuring the folio in my hands.

“You have no idea,” he replied and turned once more to his typewriter, his fingers moving slow but sure over the keys. I watched silently, for a moment, the Doctor in his element. Stopping, he seemed lost in his thoughts, and then remarked, gazing deep into the empty page: “The time it flies so far away. *Whence came those golden birds of Rimbaud’s and whither do they fly?*”

I left the Doctor so, there in his study, where his books and accolades lined the shelves. It had been a long life of study and deep contemplation, a life which spanned the years of two full centuries. And when that fatal day came, almost a month later, the newspaper carried a long obituary that detailed his incredible longevity and invaluable contributions to academic study.

There would be magazine articles printed in his honor, television documentaries, and public expositions of his many works appearing in the months that followed his death. Some made mention of a secret work which had preoccupied the Doctor for over a century and of which nothing certain was known, but was rumored to be a master

key to his life and philosophy.

For a long time I allowed the folio to remain sealed and locked within a cabinet of my study, allowing time perhaps for the investigative snoop to come poking around in search of the mysterious manuscript. I went about my life, saw my family grow and leave to start their own. But the folio rested always unopened and unread on the peripheries of my mind. After time, when no one appeared for it, and the attention of his life and work had faded away, I took the folio from the cabinet and broke the envelope open. On the yellowed various pages which I spread out before me, I read how the Doctor had typed, using a progression of many different typewriters, repeatedly for some hundred or so pages this single phrase of Augustine's: "*The memory also contains the innumerable principles and laws of numbers and dimensions.*"



CHRONOS –

“Once I found out the secret of the universe. I have forgotten what it was, but I know that the Creator does not take Creation seriously, for I remember that He sat in Space with all His work in front of Him and laughed.”

– Lord Dunsany

Crossing the virgin-river the clouds parted over the land of Time allowing a view of the sun high above the citadel. Beneath their wheels the shallow waters gave them easily to a sloping bank strewn with the shards and alluvia of imposing mountain peaks.

The earth rose slowly upward towards the crenellations and then swiftly ascended as towered walls assembled from the hard granite of the mountain. Here was Chronos in command of the hours hid behind his fortress walls.

The patrol came to a stop before a line of junipers that shielded the soldiers and the river from the broad view of the tower. The Captain dispensed his orders and consulted his map and compass, his mind ruminating on a course of strategy.

As the soldiers surveyed the area a group of elderly villagers approached and offered their assistance. Their shabby clothes and unkempt disposition suggested to the Captain that their Lord was an exacting and not at all generous master.

“What can you tell me about Chronos up there in his tower?” asked the Captain of the decrepit men.

Their wandering hands fingered the fenders and gas cans of the patrol vehicles, their shifty eyes pilfered all the soldiers had. “Do you believe you can make an assault on Time, Captain? I have seen it tried before,” proclaimed one with a furtive face.

“Time is up in his tower as you will see,” offered another.

“If you’re smart the left wall looks the easiest scaled.”

“Perhaps it is the wall which the Lord sits always with his back against,” continued the first appraising the Captain and his gear with a pale blue eye.

“It is all I can tell you,” followed another.

“Who are you gentlemen?” enquired the befuddled Captain of the strange and elderly contention, his brow knitting itself into ominous confabulations.

“We are men just like you,” they answered as one then turned and started away, hobbling towards the river below.

Undeterred, the Captain returned to his men and the soldiers readied their equipment. He set the attack for the coming hour.

As the sun moved slowly over the citadel the soldiers waited. Time readied the hour in a fistful of minutes.

When the moment came the soldiers began their assault. A group charged up the middle in a frightful storm of artillery; two flanked left toward the walls of the citadel.

Chronos watched patiently as the soldiers made their advance. The Captain claimed a strategic position and maneuvered his men in a coordinated phalanx along a station in the rise. Seeing this, Chronos hurled ten years over the heads of the invaders like a shrill wind crowded with many voices. The slope to the tower grew steeper and more tiring. The soldiers gasped and fought and labored for their breath. As the Captain marshaled his men, Chronos threw more years over their heads and more still until the hair of the men grew grey and scarcely their limbs wizened and their joints swelled arthritic with age. Many decades the Lord threw against the approaching men in the space between the fortress and the trees below.

As they reached the walls the men gathered at the base. Their boney arms stretched like haggard boughs from the sleeves of their battered uniforms. What few weapons

remained were now rusted and broken and useless with age. They looked at the wall and then the descent that lay below them.

“Do you think you can make an assault on Time, Captain?” asked one of the decrepit soldiers.

The Captain sat speechless and gazed out over the river. As one took off down the hill, another followed, and then the remainder. Chronos sat silently in his tower in command of the hours. The sun burned high above the citadel. Shuffling away the soldiers searched in the faces of the others and did not even recognize one another.



(1943) –

That year the sea rose slowly from the plain / crashing into
life swollen as an infant. – A thing of its own shadow
traced out of the ripple. – Salt white over red sand passed
from bosom into hand.

Everything that year stopped seeking / stopped struggling
with it's fate.

Things primal held in their primacy things with meanings
unknown before. – A fleet of sea-ships auspiciously set
strewn upon the floors bind the time and the space to a
strange and distant sounding place. Where the bleeding tide
fares a name and the breaking penumbra threads the
swelling furrows of the plain passed from bosom into red.



I.

In the lofty desert of the Plateau the trails meander as if the way was indecipherable. And yet with an eye turned inward my guide found no difficulty in choosing the right path when an intersection arrived and so we made quickly our way across those burning level sands to the well known ascents and descents of the valleys.

“We will rest here for the night,” my guide instructed as we paused by the gentle murmur of a mountain stream. “Tomorrow we’ll come again to the city where I was born, and I want to be rested.”

“That’s a good idea,” I assured him with relief, taking the heavy pack from my shoulder and resting it against the base of a tree. “When were you last there, if I may ask?”

“It has been many years since last I was home,” he replied, as the first stars of the evening broke overhead. “Those who have exiled me are alive there still, I am sure. And though they have known the lack of my banishment, I have felt nothing but gratefulness at having been forced from my ancestral home. For it is a place of great wretchedness which tomorrow we will enter. There they believe every allegorical saying as concrete and true; so I warn you now to believe only what you can see with you own eyes, they are a people well-along in the follies of self-deception. And though we may both be men of science and reason, even this may not prove armor enough for the devils of their illusion. Trust your intuitions, and not necessarily your instincts. The more honorable they appear, the stronger their appetite is for all that is savage.”

And with that he turned and stripped from his clothes and bathed in the cold, invigorating wash of the waters.

II.

In the central plaza of the city a group of young toughs gather around a disused bandstand and plot against those they watch meandering about.

"I bet he carries a gold watch in his pocket," proclaims one of an old man attired in the worn fashions of the previous century.

"And I bet she has hidden beneath her mattress a heavy sum of silver."

"You may be right," the first agrees rising from his perch to trail the old lady to her home.

At a distance the group observes the old lady silently going about her way, making muffled conceits and spurious plans on what and how to do the dirty deed when the moment presents itself.

Rounding a corner they allow the woman to disappear from sight as the group pauses to observe where she lives, the first of the lot peering cautiously around the corner. But as he looks his vision is blocked by the grey vested breast of a familiar figure staring disdainfully down at him.

"I told you to keep your perch until I called for you," admonished the Doctor.

"You did, sir. We were just out stretching our legs is all," the first replied, taking in the sight of the old lady making a flight of steps leading up an alley staircase.

"It appears they are stretched enough; now return to where you were and await my notice. Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir," the first agrees, turning and motioning for the others to follow.

The Doctor watches the group depart and then turns and crosses the street toward the alleyway and the staircase where the old lady had gone. Taking the first steps he turns and looks again towards the corner before ascending the

stairs and entering a squeaky wooden door and a long dimly lit hallway. At a door he pauses and knocks.

Opening the door, the old lady welcomes him inside.

"How have you been?" the Doctor asks her.

"As well as can be expected, as you well know," she tells him. "The city is dying, I am dying. Youth is feeding on old age, recycling again what is what and what is not is nothing but the unity of all things."

"You are talking in riddles again Señora. If living is the only existence and its dying is nonexistent, then you have certainly lived in this city since it was begun a long, long time ago."

"Even I cannot say how old I really am," she admitted with a failing voice. "Somewhere in such an apartment as this there is the story of whence it all had become. But I am too old and too tired to care for it anymore. I leave it up to you, in your unendurable patience for things, to find it and learn its secrets. But whatever you do, do not be guided by your dull eyes, nor by the resounding of your ears. Intellect cannot be trusted. Truth exists as though in a house of palest cobwebs and emptiness."

The Doctor knit his brow in consternation with her enigmatic words and looked about the room. In the darkness of its corners the hollow husks of memories and fantasies still lived and crawled about silently without bodies or with, in ephemera and the gloomy apocrypha of dreams and archetypes.

"Your agents are nowhere as near to finding what you seek as when I might be thinking of it. For they think and seek only by the Word and as any good philosopher, like yourself, by now knows, words are only the symbols and not the reality which they represent..."

"Señora," the Doctor interrupted. "Please don't discard our agreement."

“I will honor our agreement, Herr Doctor,” she began with an air of condescension. “When I reveal your secret to you I will clothe it not in mysteries. The problem with you and your agency of perception in the situation is that all your conceptions invariably lead only to contradictions. If you’d ever just think about it, all Time is concurrent with the now and any idea which you may conceive is of no more reality than that which your right senses might impart.”

“But this conception cannot be logical, Señora,” the Doctor admonished, with a perplexing expression radiating from the creasing lines of his face. “If this is what it is that I have been made to wait, as patiently and politely as I have been made to wait, Señora, then I would be very disappointed to have been made to wait for so long.”

“Don’t get so upset, Herr Doctor. It is not as you might now perceive. I will admit to a good deal of error in the percepts of this reality; and you will come to realize that little is conveyed with any degree of accuracy which is related merely by its words alone. Possibility is always contingent upon resource, as the subjective and the essential flux of it resides in the ceaseless experiences of life, cyclical life, which is not the fool conception of a completely unphysical existence. Your own plausibility does not wholly exist as of yet. If anyone’s did, the next thing you’d know, people the world over would be working to bring about the end of the human race and the physical world as we know and love it. Regardless of its dichotomies and its many and inherent flaws, it is a world of forgetting in which we reside. There is however a plurality of realities which we partake of...” Her words here trailed off into the recesses of her memory and the Doctor let her gather herself again.

The Doctor sat on a finely cushioned divan and peered patiently out from a window toward the corner of the street.

“Those boys in the plaza this afternoon,” she began again.

“They are under your directive, are they not?”

“They are,” the Doctor answered.

“And the one that does your bidding, the leader of the lot, he is not completely under your control, am I right?”

“Of course he isn’t; as no man ever is.”

“No man,” she continued, “however a creature of one’s own bidding might ever be in the fullest possession (*ex concessis*) of his own faculties as well?”

“I suppose.”

“And if that man, regarding himself a man and the instrument of his Time, is charged with his theories of justice; then the boy is simply the manifestation of your will, isn’t he? He is your own young doppelganger, Herr Doctor.”

“He is able to do as I refuse to do, if that is what you mean. I cannot sully my hands with such drama...”

“Of course you cannot. But if it is Godliness you seek, there will come a time, my friend, when you will have to kill the young bull yourself if you are to be rid of this world and yourself. It will take a heroic effort of flesh and spirit to accomplish this, I hope you understand. For there is not one but two selves we enter this world with and though one might feel the need to enslave the lesser evil to serve the higher good, it is too often a freed and lesser example which assumes the role of master, if one is not mindful of these inherent and personal dichotomies. Only cattle believe that Being and Non-Being are One in the same thing; they are mere word puzzles to bide the time with. And all things move in a circle.”



THE DOCTOR –

*“A few can remember that summer. The sun’s breath
shriveled what it touched. No one went out, for there
was fever in the lower city.*

– Paul Bowles

The Doctor sat in a wan golden light, his head leaning back watching the play of shadows on the ceiling, allowing the long ashes from his cigarette to fall in a small mound of cinders that was forming on the floor. It was not that the Doctor was lazy or ambivalent to the small mess he was making; he was, in fact, performing a simple scientific experiment. As his ears tuned out every other sound, he concentrated their effort into searching the noise of the day for the warble of a particular bird, the Painted Redstart, whose plaintive song the Doctor noticed had conspicuously disappeared. He endeavored to satisfy his suspicions on the cause.

The Doctor had heard the story of wild animals being able to sense a coming catastrophe and evacuating an area shortly before tragedy strikes. By lighting a cigarette and letting it slowly burn down to a frail finger of ash, he was using it as a sort of crude seismometer able to detect even the faintest geophysical disturbance. As a distant tremor was felt and the ash of another cigarette hit the floor, the Doctor got up and walked to the window and looked out toward the plains of the central plateau. Below him the city and its people busied themselves unaware that their safety was at eminent risk.

Taking a suitcase from under the bed, the Doctor began to fill it with the necessities of survival: three changes of clothes, toiletries, and a sheaf of various papers and documents. In the bathroom, he filled the tub and broke open a bag of cat food. In the kitchen he turned off the gas

to the stove and hot water heater and generally set the place for a possible earthquake, removing dishes and things that might fall and break; the Doctor was quick and methodical. Into a shoulder bag he stashed a good deal of money and the agencies of his livelihood.

Outside, the Doctor boarded a bus and rode to the train station. Once there, he found he was not the first to intuit that a catastrophe was near; worried others had also made their way to the station and were buying a way out of town. Few felt open enough to discuss the reason for their leaving, but in each face the Doctor could see the well-concealed panic that ground in the gears of their minds. His quick decisions proved enough to get there in time to catch the next train to Veracruz.

As a porter checked his suitcase, the Doctor recognized him as a regular customer of his. With a trembling hand the porter handed back the ticket and looked up into the face of the Doctor. "Your leaving town?" the man asked him with an obvious disappointment. "I was coming to see you when I got off work. This train to Veracruz does not make a return until tomorrow. Is there any way I can score from you now, I'm burning up inside."

The Doctor looked into the porter's sunken eyes and said: "Meet me in the bathroom in five minutes; I guess I can make one final deal before I leave. Something terrible is about to happen here, you should think about leaving the city yourself."

"What do you mean something terrible? What's going on?"

"Have you noticed all the birds have left the place?" asked the Doctor looking around.

"No," replied the porter. "But there ain't no birds here at the station anyways."

"Meet me in the bathroom in five minutes."

Inside the bathroom, the Doctor entered an empty stall and

readied a small score to keep the porter during his absence, cautiously measuring out a few grains by eye. The door again opened and a pair of shuffling feet appeared outside the stall. "Hey Doctor, are you there?" asked the voice of the porter as a blue cellophane bag was passed to him.

"On the house," replied the Doctor as the boarding call for the train to Veracruz was heard ringing out from the loudspeakers. He wondered if he had closed all the windows at home and worried about his cats.

On board the train he found his seat, cradling his shoulder bag tightly to himself. As the train lurched forward he watched the station and the porter pass by. A warm glow of relief swept over him.

Meanwhile, across town Eva Silentia busied herself at her station as the end of her shift drew near. With the sound of a whistle, she stopped what she was doing, washed her hands and punched her card, filing out of the factory and into the dusky street along with a crowd of others. As she made the corner she began the long walk home up a series of narrow streets, her back aching from arduous hours working without a break. In a nearby doorway a figure was waiting and as she passed a hand reached out and took her by the arm pulling her into the shadows.

"What are you doing here?" she asked as Arthur wrapped her hands into his, bringing her closer.

"I'm here to kidnap you and take you away," he joked and kissed her lightly on the lips.

"Aren't I the lucky one?" she exclaimed. "Since you are here, you can buy a taxi to take me home. My whole body is aching and I can hardly take another step."

Turning around, Arthur bent down and offered his back to her. "Your taxi has arrived, Madame."

"Wow, such luxury," she replied and jumped on him

wrapping her arms around his neck and planting a kiss firmly upon his cheek.

As the two started off, a group of her fellow workers were heard amused with the sight of them. At a distance the figure of the two was silhouetted against the failing light ascending the stairs to Eva's humble apartment.

Once inside, the two fell into the bed which took up most of the space in the single room. Wrapped in embrace they kissed and laughed as lovers do. Outside the rumble of the train raced by, causing the place to shake and the cupboards to clatter. Eva looking up with a toss of her hair saw the quick procession of windows crowded with travelers speeding by. In one of them she saw the image of a face she recognized.

"My father!" she exclaimed. "I just saw my father on that train."

"Are you sure?" asked Arthur rolling around to face the window himself. "That's the five o'clock to Veracruz. I thought you said your father never leaves his neighborhood."

"He doesn't. His customers are too dependant on him to travel anywhere but the corner store. It's not like him to leave."

"Perhaps you're mistaken; you haven't seen him in years."

"No, something's wrong," she replied, sitting up and looking out over the roofs of the city. "He once told me that the only thing that could get him to leave the city was an earthquake. The city sits right on a fault line; and when the big one comes he'll know it by the song of the birds. Come," she said, jumping out of bed and opening the window, leaning her head out into the still dusky air.

"They're gone. The birds, they're all gone. I don't see a single one anywhere," she said with slow amazement.

"Do you think he could be right?" asked Arthur joining her

at the window. “Maybe he’s running from somebody.”
“My father runs from nobody, he doesn’t have to. He’s got protection from the police. Unlike most people, my father thinks for himself, and if he reads something into nature like what he said to me, he is very rarely wrong. We’ve got to leave the city as soon as possible. Something terrible is about to happen.”



The next morning a farmer named Dionisio Pulido stepped outside into the cold Mexican air. On a short adobe wall he knocked a pair of muddy leather boots, banging the heels together like two hammers to loose the earth. Pulling them on he jumped and stamped his feet on the cobbles. A crude rhythm of dull hammers filled the misty air. Wrapping himself up in layers of clothes, he took off to walk his land, towards a quarter he was preparing for maze.

At a well house he knelt to check on the pump and found it not frozen, as expected, but warm and sweaty. Slim fingers of steam radiated from its pipes. Looking around him, Dionisio puzzled over it and caught upon the stillness the scent of something rotten in the air.

As his nose drew his eyes across the field he spied a gloom of smoke or vapor hanging low over the morning ground. Closer up he discovered a narrow, yet deep fissure some thirty feet long which had opened in the earth overnight. A faint heat radiated from its narrow mouth, which Dionisio measured as about twice the width of his boot. Straddling over it and imagining the immense natural power residing beneath him, the warmth traveled up his legs. The smell of sulfur twisted in the still morning air.

Returning to the house he found his wife Maria readying breakfast and told her of what he found. Her brow knit itself into a furrow, half curious, half alarmed on hearing the strange report. "What could it be?" she puzzled aloud wringing her hands in the pleats of her apron. Setting the cooking aside, she pulled on a pair of rugged rubber boots and followed her husband into the fields to see for herself. Almost immediately the foul odor caught her attention with the rotten egg smell of sulfur. Dionisio walked briskly ahead of her, lowering the wide brim of his hat against the

rising sun. Maria walked in his shadow.

At the fissure, Maria advanced cautiously. Sensing her fear, Dionisio took her hand and led her nearer to it. As the two stood over the abyss looking obscurely at one another they felt a deep rumbling below, very faint at the approach but stronger and more foreboding as it broke. As their shadows drew up behind them; the sky was cleared. A short time after they felt another tremor grow low to the surface and release its strength, increasing the span of the chasm some several feet in an instant. A spray of bitter gasses coughed out of the mouth.

Retreating to a safer vantage the two watched the earth heave and settle, buckling up a small, building mound. "Thank goodness we hadn't planted yet," said Dionisio, appraising the notion that a volcano might be forming right there in his very own cornfield.



WRONG NUMBER –

Hamir grabbed the key from atop the dresser and went downstairs to ask the concierge for use of the telephone. With a quick finger he dialed the number as if he'd called it a thousand times. A voice on the other end answered in a pleasant tone: "Import / Export."

"I am calling for Señor Silentia," said Hamir pulling a pack of cigarettes from his breast pocket.

"I'm sorry," the voice replied. "There is no Señor Silentia here, are you sure you have the right number?"

"My apologies, I must be mistaken," he said replacing the receiver and lighting the cigarette. Through the foyer's window Hamir caught sight of Arthur standing and talking to someone just out of view. Hamir's eyes watched his moving lips mouth out the words: "It is my responsibility," his finger poking into his chest for an added effect.

Arthur turned and glanced toward the lobby of the hotel and saw Hamir watching him. He gathered himself up, cutting short his conversation and motioned for the other to leave, his lips mouthing out the words: "You'd better get going."

As Hamir stepped outside he found Arthur alone and asked him who he was talking to.

"Nobody," he said. "I was talking to myself. Rehearsing what I was going to say when we get busted for this."

"Busted for this?" Hamir questioned, then walked toward the corner of the building to check if anybody was there. Across the street the figure of Fletcher Morrison was seen hurrying away.

"Was Morrison just here?" asked Hamir incredulously of Arthur, sizing him up. "For a moment; he was asking about the Doctor is all."

"The Doctor? What's Fletcher Morrison want with the

Doctor, that slimy Rube? If I catch you two conspiring behind my back..."

"Nobody's conspiring behind your back," Arthur retorted thrusting his hands into his pockets attempting to attain a posture of innocence.

Hamir looked him up and down in disbelief.

"What do you want me to say?" exclaimed Arthur pleading his case. "He said he had some information for him is all."

"What kind of information?"

"Personal information. About his daughter."

"The Doctor has a daughter?" puzzled Hamir aloud. "Why wasn't I told of this? What did you tell him?"

"I told him none of your business," explained Arthur with perturbation.

"You're holding out on me, my friend, I know this. You think you can pull the wool over my eyes? You got another thing coming."

Arthur reeled his head around in exasperation. "Man, will you just calm down. The Doctor's daughter is not a threat."

"How you know this? Everybody is a potential threat. If one word were to leak and Señor Silentia found out about it. Do you know what would happen to you and me? Do you? It wouldn't be pretty, my friend. The island is practically circled with an army of assholes who couldn't keep their mouths shut, all wearing cement boots and swimming with the fishes."

"Morrison thinks the Señor Silentia is just a spook, or a functionary at best," said Arthur. "Concrete boots? I mean, who really does that anyway?"

"The ruthless sort, that's who. And don't think for a minute that it doesn't happen. Have you ever seen Señor Silentia and the Doctor in the same room together? No. When the one leaves, the other always enters. Don't think that this doesn't mean anything, because it does."

“It means you’re paranoid, I know that.”

“He is an Avatar is what I think,” announced Hamir. “A doppelganger at best.”

Arthur scoffed at the preposterous remarks and looked askance at Hamir pacing anxiously in front of the hotel; though he was too of the opinion that something very strange was going on between Señor Silentia and the Doctor. The idea of one of them being an Avatar would go a long way toward explaining many unusual things that Arthur was having great internal difficulty coming to reasonable terms with. Why was it, he concurred, that the two never did occupy the same space?

“When I was a boy,” Hamir began. “My Grandmother told me the story of an Avatar that a local businessman used to swindle the ignorant citizens of her neighboring village. She said he would send it out to act as himself at one house, while he was in fact making contrary deals at another. He had soon set the whole village against one another and in the confusion that ensued, swindled all of them from their savings before disappearing. This is not something at all unusual for the Rubes to pull on innocent, trusting people. Your friend Silentia, I don’t trust him for this very reason.”

“You’re out of your bloody mind, Hamir,” Arthur asserted with force, taking Hamir by the lapels and throwing him back.

“But it’s true,” exclaimed Hamir.

“No it isn’t. There is no such thing as a goddamned Avatar, you idiot. All that is a bunch of superstitious baloney. Now, I would agree that there is something fishy between the two, but to accuse them of being an Avatar or a doppelganger is far beyond the realm of possibility...I can’t believe I’m even in this with someone who thinks such foolish rubbish.”

“Are you calling my grandmother a fool?” argued Hamir

pushing his sleeves up his boney arms.

At that point Arthur took Hamir by the arm and forced the sleeve high up, exposing the pitiful scars of a needle junky that riddled the flesh of Hamir's timorous limb.

"The shit's been eating away at your brain," scoffed Arthur in disgust, pushing Hamir away.

"No more than yours, my friend."

"Look, I don't want to hear any more about it," explained Arthur. "Tomorrow we will make the exchange and when this whole affair is over, I want to get as far away from this place as possible. Ok? Right now I have something I need to go do. I suggest you go back up to your room and stay there. You're crazy behavior will only bring the heat on us, you understand?"

"Where are you going? To the Doctor's?"

"It's none of your business where I'm going."

"Ahh," declared Hamir with self-satisfaction. "You're going to the daughter's, I can tell."



PARICUTIN –

*“For it is the percepts of the senses that gives
percipience of the things unknown.”*

– Anaxagoras

As the mound in Dionisio Pulido’s cornfield began to grow, word spread quickly that a very unique event was taking place. First the geologists arrived and took measurements, then a flock of journalists descended upon the poor farmer like so many vultures upon a corpse. Crowds of curious onlookers forced their way onto his lands and Dionisio Pulido soon found it very difficult to move about the village without the constant pestering and questions they asked. To make difficult matters worse, a group of religious fanatics were spreading the rumor that Dionisio had opened a gate to hell through his clandestine communion with the Wicked One. It took no time at all for him to grow weary of the unwanted attention and before long it was necessary for the poor farmer to employ a bodyguard to protect him and his wife from the constant incursions into his privacy.

One particular nuisance was an American evangelist named Hagen who along with a small army of Pentecostal crazies had set up camp on Pulido’s land anticipating Armageddon with Satan as he emerged from the underworld. After Hagen took to the airways denouncing the hapless farmer for his satanic enterprises, Dionisio Pulido found himself an outcast from his community and church.

No amount of scientific explanation could deter the religious fanatics like Hagen from their erroneous belief that what was growing there in the field of this poor and simple farmer was actually a volcano and not the end-times actualization. However, when the eruptions began and the furious heat of slow lava engulfed the area, the fanatical

crowds, finding no great Satan other than the terrifying workings of nature, dispersed themselves back to whatever rocks they had crawled out from under.

Soon Dionisio Pulido's home and farm was consumed, as was the Church of San Juan, by the molten flow. Only then the scientists remained as well as a handful of intrepid journalists intent on covering the event for the curious and far-flung presses of the world. And the religious crazies moved on to the next victim of their insane quest for the end of the world.



THE CONTACT –

“And immediately, from the gardens of Sidoeis or Pleistus He cut green apples, and imitated the appearance of Cadmus.”

– Athenaeus

I.

In the American newspaper a short article of was found buried inside concerning the rescue of two men off the coast of southern California who had been adrift in a small dingy for several weeks. It noted the two were of unknown nationality, but likely American. No further information, however, could be gathered from them as they had each literally eaten his tongue in hunger. They were found naked, delirious with dehydration and, as Arthur found most curious, in possession of a briefcase cuffed securely to one of their wrists.

Arthur lowered the paper and gazed out over the plaza. A group of boys were seen approaching, making their way through the crowd of pedestrians in his direction. For a moment it seemed that one was looking straight at him as they neared. Folding the paper Arthur, turned and saw that the back door of the café stood open. For an instant, he began preparing to make a quick slip out through the alleyway if needed. However at that very moment another youth stopped in front of the group and they stood talking amongst themselves in the plaza before leaving together in another direction. Through the moving figures the one looked again in his direction and Arthur could feel his cold stare from across the way.

Settling back in his seat, Arthur pulled out a small black book and looked inside, taking out a business card. He raised his hand and called the waitress over, asking for the telephone, which she delivered, stringing the long cord over

the bar and across the room. Picking up the receiver he dialed the number.

After a single ring a voice on the other end answered: "Import / Export," it said in a pleasant tone.

Arthur paused for a moment and looked at the card, reading from it: "I was calling for Doctor Silentia."

"One moment please," the voice replied as a series of clicks were heard on the line and another voiced toned in: "I'm sorry Señor Silentia is not here at the moment. May I be of assistance Mr. Ceregate?"

Arthur looked curiously in front of him. The waitress stood behind the bar buffing glasses with a dingy cloth, her eyes rising to meet his. "No. I'll call again, thank you."

Replacing the receiver, the waitress neared. "You are Mr. Ceregate?" she asked.

"I am."

"Señor Silentia will see you now. Would you come with me? He is not very far."

"Sure," Arthur replied hesitantly, realizing he had been under eye the whole time he sat there. "Should I pay the bill first?"

"It is no problem, Mr. Ceregate. The Doctor is waiting."

II.

In the basement of a shady warehouse the Doctor sat behind a large metal desk painted that horrible guacamole green they used to paint all government-issued office furniture. A spare light lit the area with a dim yellow glow, unsurely penetrating the shadows of the room. As Arthur was shown a seat, the Doctor struck a match and lit a cigar, its smoke filling the air and obscuring his features. From behind the gloom a voice greeted him:

"I have been following your movements since you arrived here, Mr. Ceregate. And if I have been following your

movements, then likely the others have done so as well. You are not a very careful man.”

“What others do you mean?” replied Arthur. “I’ve planned my movements with the greatest care, changing my appearance every day, using a variety of identities.”

“Precisely, how we recognized you, Mr. Ceregate. Nobody is innocuous in this town. Secrecy is a dead giveaway,” replied the Doctor laying his cigar down and leaning forward into the light, revealing a dark and bearded face with the sunken eyes of someone very familiar with the trade.

“I am awaiting my contact,” declared Arthur. “The agency has informed me that my orders are on deferment for now and I should lay low as possible here in the city until further notice. Are you my contact?”

“If I were,” the Doctor replied. “Do you think that I would be meeting you here, in a seedy warehouse such as this?”

“It doesn’t seem so bad to me. I’ve seen worse of course; have you ever been to Veracruz?”

“What have you been told about your contact, Mr. Ceregate? Have you tried the usual methods of connecting with your contact, like finding a quiet café somewhere out of the way?”

“I thought you’d know, if you’ve been following my movements as you say,” maintained Arthur, taking in the figure of the Doctor and the books and accolades which lined the walls and shelves. “This after-noon before I called you, there was a group of youths in the plaza...”

“They answer to me.”

“They do? There was this one, he almost looked right through me; he had the coldest eyes. I thought for sure my cover had been blown.”

“That would be Sammy. He is a very ruthless young man. But he does as I tell him. He is very loyal.”

“Then it was you who called them away?” inquired Arthur searching out the Doctor’s sphere of influence.

“It was. I figured that if I revealed something to you, you’d finally call. Which you did, of course, like a well-trained operative should.”

“If you are not my contact, then what is your role within the agency?” questioned Arthur as the figure of the Doctor leaned back into the shadows, pulling long on his cigar.

“My station with the agency is one not at all unlike you own, Mr. Ceregate. I am awaiting my contact here as well. My orders too are on deferment.”

“How long have you been waiting? If you don’t mind my asking.”

“I have waited here ten years now,” replied the Doctor.

“And I’ve known others to have waited even longer. Undoubtedly, you read in the newspaper today a story concerning two men rescued from the drift in a modest boat?”

“I did,” replied Arthur.

“And did you wonder what it could be that was of such importance as to necessitate protecting it within a case handcuffed to the wrist of a man set adrift?”

“It is true, I admit. Seeing that story I thought immediately of the manuscript which every agent is in search of. And how the rarities of time can produce such work as would find two men cast upon an ocean because of incomprehension. I had no idea the drift could encompass so many others,” admitted Arthur.

The Doctor leaned in and with stern reproach castigated Arthur. “The drift is what brings us all to this place of uncertainty; believing the half-drawn ideas of the Deity are sublime truth are alone what keeps us here in this miserable place. Understand that the imagination swirling about your head is not your own, my friend. It very rarely is. Most

likely it is being fed to you by those seeking to control, or to profit from you.”

“If that is so, then tell me what is it that I am suspecting.”

“You suspect that you and I are one and the same, obviously. Deposited here with likemindedness from different times, but with the same intent; which is to be made to wait. I myself wisened up have found another to do my bidding for me, his name is Sammy, today you saw him for the first time and you recognized something in him as so did he in you.”

“What I suspect goes even farther than that, Doctor. And thus place is the very proof that I am correct in my assessment. That we are all one and the same, given a like and natural purpose,” Arthur proclaimed, rising from his seat and placing both hands upon the desk, leaning forward in the face of the Doctor. “Being dreamed only in the strife of time and God’s forgetting.”

The Doctor smiled and fell back again into the shadows. “It is not so unusual, is it?” he said. “To find oneself in another. Give it a moment of patience and listen...The song of the Deity produces many possibilities unforeseen by those who sit only in attendance. One must be a musician oneself to understand the score. The contact you seek sighs softly in the rain-thrilled leaves of that sheaf of papers held tightly in that courier’s case. All else here is myth; and vanity it is to think that time and act does not perpetually repeat itself.”

III.

When the Doctor emerged from the warehouse it was already evening and as yet no sign of the contact was made, he had decided to take the liberty of sampling the local flavor. The night may have been young, but not its ladies

and so with a hale and a whistle he summoned a taxi.

From the backseat the Doctor watched the city pass, its neon and crowds racing by in a blur of color and sounds. After a series of stoplights and turns the car delivered him to an apartment block, its brick walls crawling with vine and ivy.

"What is this?" asked the Doctor of the driver as he came to a stop.

"Here we wait," the driver answered.

"Wait for what?"

"You will see."

After a few minutes a figure emerged from the building and approached the cab. A hand reached for the door, opened it and slid inside. "Herr Doctor?"

"Yes."

"My name is John Frumm, I believe you have been waiting to see me. I'm sorry for the inconvenience, but one must be very careful these days. The spooks are out in force."

The driver turned around and faced the road, put the car into gear and started off.

"I have been informed that you are in possession of a certain manuscript," began the Doctor.

"I am," replied John Frumm.

"The manuscript is mine and I want it returned to me, you have no right to its possession."

"By the black mud of plagiarism I don't. What flows from those pages is mine as much as anybody's."

"The assignment is not yours, Mister Frumm. To fumble through its leaves without my authority only makes of them a jumbled mess of half-drawn ideas; and I know you have seen this happen."

"Perhaps I have, Herr Doctor," said John Frumm agreeing.

"But the Deity itself borrows as much from one creature as it does another; and you yourself have seen this too,

undoubtedly. So what is good for the goose is good for the gander; like it is also for those singing bird-winged trees of the Deity's wandering thoughts. Appropriation is not the same as thieving if one's aim is to give as much or more back from where one has taken."

"You're no Robin Hood, friend. So return me the manuscript and all will be forgiven," the Doctor conceded. "Nothing from nothing leaves nothing; and no man wants nothing."

"So much is true," John Frumm agreed again. "However, the work you seek is being couriered now in the back of a delivery truck through the busy streets of the city along within an antique cabinet like the brief incarnations of the Deity's fleeting imagination. I know well how to hide the divine train of thought amongst the musings of random history. If you have time for me, I will return your work in kind. The plagiarists will have no need of another worn-out myth as the one that wears so wearily upon the mind as a work of scant originality like your own."

"Very well, then, take me to it" the Doctor replied and fell again into the wan shadows of the corner of the seat and the colorful wash of the city's night unfolding.



THE KINGDOM –

“It is only for the sake of those without hope that hope is given to us.”

– Walter Benjamin

I.

Between a persons sensation experiencing a thing (“the rabble of the senses” as Plato put it) and that of the thing-perceived / or between subjectivity and objectivity – there lies a Mythos.

As Subjectivity is the thing knowing / but the thing which is never extrinsically known: Objectivity is the thing being known / but that which cannot be intrinsically known.

Betwixt the two the Self lay in Mythos: *“For Thine is the Kingdom / Between the conception / And the creation.”*

The former is one’s individual mind contemplating or experiencing an abstract perception / the latter is the infinitely diverse matter which it infers to. The myth of Self is: “Every one finds himself to be subject” as states Schopenhauer “yet only in so far as he knows / not in so far as he is an object of knowledge.”

The Creator of the universe one might conceive is the creator of the thought itself. As the universal forms of all objects: space, time and causality – are found without the knowledge of the object fully aware in the *a priori* consciousness of the subject.

The danger one intuitis in this Mythos resides in the distortion a thing undergoes to conform to the cognition of the subjective arbiter, *“not as it is, but as it wants to create itself.”*

II.

Somewhere along that interminable journey, my companions and I came upon a tiny rustic village nestled

comfortably in the mountains. It was the type of poor, squalid hamlet common to the region, populated by a lonely people who eke out a humble yet hearty existence. Tired and hungry we spied an old inn and went inside to find our respite. The place was low and dimly lit, patronized chiefly by the locals who greeted our party warmly.

After a somewhat marginal meal, we each ordered beers and took to conversing with our fellow patrons. Eventually, someone asked the question: "What would you ask for if you could be granted anything that you wished?"

A few reeled visibly from the general silliness of the proposal and for a moment I thought the idea would be abandoned.

"I would wish for a new saw," answered finally a carpenter with much simplicity in his heart.

"I would wish for a wife for my son," answered quickly another.

"And I a husband for my grand-daughter," replied a sturdy old woman. "Perhaps we should arrange an introduction." And the whole group broke out in laughter.

One by one the patrons spoke of their simple desires: money, health, and companionship.

When all had answered, the carpenter called out a man who sat hidden in the corner unseen by myself and my companions. He was dressed in a filthy shirt and tattered jacket with a dark hat pulled down low over his eyes. He had quietly listened to all that was said, warming himself alone by the fire over a plate of untouched victuals. Without looking up he said in a distant and forlorn tenor:

"I'd wish, I was a powerful king of a wealthy land, when one night, upon the eve of a daughters wedding, I would be roused from my slumber by the call of the guards that my enemy was baring down the walls of the castle. And

without a chance to even clothe myself, I'd escape into the night wearing nothing but a shirt. Traveling all through the night and the several days that followed, over mountains and through valleys, so I could safely arrive here at this inn, to warm myself by the fire and listen to the desires of a simple people."

Everybody listening knit their brow incredulously. Then someone queried of the stranger: "What good could such a wish have done for you?"

"I'd have a shirt," was the stranger's only answer.



TOMORROW—

“In some remote corner of the universe, effused into innumerable solar-systems, there was once a star under which clever animals invented cognition. It was the haughtiest, most mendacious moment in the history of this world, but yet only a moment. After Nature had taken breath awhile the star congealed and the clever animals had to die.”

— Friedrich Nietzsche

I.

As teams work diligently to pair two of every like kind, crews of men labor around the clock to ready the Arks for voyage. In the cities, lotteries are being held to select, at random, those fortunate few who will make up the citizenry of the new off-world colonies. In the countryside, those bravest who will remain are already establishing communes, preparing to weather the consequences that fatefully await them. Each new day sees the temperatures climb and the sea levels rise. Already several coastal areas have been lost to the bloat of the oceans and in the interior vast inundations have claimed those towns and municipalities which dwell in the flood plains along swelling rivers and lake shores. Soon even those who maintain elevation in mountainous zones should find that this advantage will prove of no avail as those vaporous waters rain heavily down upon them, stripping all livelihood from the mountainsides. And when those sweaty future generations watch the sun grow to unforgiving proportions, they too will perish as eventually all the planet's water dissipates into the vast reaches of space, leaving the Earth then but a dry and rocky desert devoid of all its promise of life. Finding ourselves abandoned to the universe, without God or ally, we will find that Time is not the friend of Man, but our

fiercest adversary; and alone in Space will the future of the race reside where destiny finds no footing in infinity.

At the dawn of a new beginning, with a heavy and anxious heart we say our goodbyes, looking forward to a risky and unforeseen tomorrow with all its great and incalculable challenges. And so I come down to the fields and the woods that remain to once again enjoy the beauties of my motherland and sing her songs of abundance.

II.

Through the curtains of trees a line of refugees is seen; men, women and children tramping out of the cities and into a wilderness where their hope may lead them to salvation. Some travel empty-handed, others weighed down with as much as they might carry. Well paid "guides" help lead the way with promises of advantageous contacts with well-placed officials of the Diaspora.

From a well-concealed perch two agents observe the sad parade, their eyes open for a particular sort known to carry secret discourses in the guise of literary papers. Descending a rise three figures appear, a woman and child and a man dressed in city garb ill-suited for such an expedition; clutched tightly to his person the man carries an attaché case.

"This briefcase is most important to me," the man is heard saying along the route. *"I dare not lose it. The manuscript must be saved. It is more important than I am, more important than myself."*

His observers dispatch a team to follow the group; they join the line of refugees at a close distance behind.

After many hours the travelers reach a cliff overlooking a quiet town below. A guide points out a small hotel and tells them that here a contact will be found who will relay the

three to an awaiting vessel and safety. A further payment will be necessary for the requisite papers.

As night falls the three travelers enter the lobby of the hotel and book a room. Over the gentle town a storm cloud is seen to form; its quiet rumble shakes the windows and the glass.

“No luggage?” the concierge asks suspiciously.

“It has been sent ahead,” the man replies. Looking around him his trepidation grows as he feels the heat of many eyes upon him, darting back behind the rustle of newspapers and disfigured plants.

Ascending the stairs the man leans in and whispers to the woman: “We are being watched. I think this place is a trap.”

“A trap...” the woman begins only to be quieted nervously by the man.

“Hurry up to the room,” he tells her, quickening his gate.

Once upstairs the man searches the room for hidden listening devices; finding none he takes out a pad of paper and pencils his concerns out to her. Afterwards he writes two letters with instructions for their delivery. Under a bed he hides the attaché case.

Within minutes a knock is heard upon the door.

Opening it the man finds two well-dressed agents. “Arthur Ceregate,” the men announce. “You are to come with us immediately.”

He turns to the woman and calms her, fanning his hands.

“It will only take a minute,” an agent informs him and the three of them leave together. The figure of Arthur Ceregate, flanked by the two men disappearing down the dimly lit hall as the door closes slowly behind him.

Later that evening a woman approaches the door and enters the room, bearing with her the necessary papers needed for

the woman and child. From under the bed the attaché case is retrieved and its contents examined.

“Mr. Ceregate, is he ok?” the woman asks.

“He is right as rain, I can assure you. He told me to tell you not to worry and that everything will be fine.”

That night the woman slept comfortably beside her child. The next morning as she stepped out into the bright sunshine, the light almost blinded her. *For who can say more of their own existence than that it has passed through the lives of two or three others as gently and closely as the weather.*



THE TRAVELER –

In one of the distant laboratories of the creative imagination a man is prepared for a unique and original journey. What years of preparation and study have gone into the events he was about to participate can only be told by the most adventurous engineers of the esoteric arts and sciences.

Upon a well-treated bed the subject is laid out and administered a large dose of hermeneutics, his neck and head supported and his limbs positioned in an appropriate attitude.

“Are you comfortable?” asks a technician of the supine subject.

“I am,” he replies.

“Very good, then,” the technician says comfortingly. “If the experiment is a success, then time itself will prove traversable, and the influx of your own apposition will fashion itself circumspectly within a given frame of reference. The affect to you, the traveler, should be as if passing through a wall of water, the forgetting and the remembrance of it all. If all goes well it will be as if you had dreamed these several hours, allowing the machine its machinations.

“Are you ready?”

“I am.”

And with that the process began. The technician threw the requisite switches and through the effervescent partition of memory and forgetfulness he passed, and towards the shadows at the edges of the world found a way into the light, arriving upon the shores of an explicit conscious experience...



THE ESCHATON –

“... the hour of our apparitions is fixed forever, and
always brings us back the very same ones.”

– Auguste Blanqui

“Being terrified by the allegorical meanings of the ever-evolving world,” the Doctor continued, “many religionists worked tirelessly to devolutionize the human race. The Young-Earth theorists constituted some of the very worst of the lot, convincing multitudes that primates were actually devolved from man by their rejection of God. Can you actually believe such mindlessness?”

“I remember that George Romero invented the zombie myth out of those who wished to destroy men’s minds,” I responded.

“You’re right. *Night of the Living Dead* was an allegory of consumerism originally. And after seeing it evolve into a fully-formed mythology Christians came to believe that it was a realistic foretelling of the end-times, when the dead would walk the earth. Amazing the convolution of things, isn’t it?”

The Doctor ran a sample through the conveyor and set the controls for maximum solubility.

“We’ll make sure no possibility is prohibited your father in the Eschaton. Not everybody gets such treatment, you know,” the Doctor divulged.

“I appreciate everything you can do for him, Doctor,” I said, watching the first readings of the instrument. “After such a life of sacrifice, he deserves the most heavenly rewards we can provide him.”

“I agree,” the Doctor conferred. “We all watched in awe his work following the Apocalypse. He was one of those essential few, without him we’d have lost it all.”

“Well, I can’t thank you enough for providing him this op-

portunity, Doctor. He has been a great supporter of your work with the Eschaton. But his health, unfortunately, has not allowed him to make any statements concerning this.”

“He was an inspiration to us all,” the Doctor admitted, sitting back in his chair and letting the process work.

“There we were, the whole country devastated with the aftermath; all those dead bodies to dispose of, and the utter depression of it all. Without your father coordinating with the French and educating against the dispensationalists. His unadulterated goodness was a marvel to witness after the savagery perpetuated by those who fostered such mindlessness and murder. To reclaim some of their parlance: your father was a *true saint*.”

“So what exactly will the Eschaton be like?” I asked the Doctor.

“It simply *is* heaven,” he conceded. “As they used to say: ‘Heaven is in your mind.’ His entire mental substance, his sentience, memory and comprehension will continue to exist within the Eschaton in a perceptive reality completely separate from his living vessel; being sustained now by the electromagnetism supplied to his own unique biorhythm as it did when he was alive. Even though the religionists claimed there was a supernatural ‘heaven’, so to speak, rewarded only the faithful after death, we know now that it was merely their wishful thinking, or, ultimately their fear of death. Which is a completely understandable construct of the id. They somehow thought that mankind, at its stage of evolution, was at its ultimate development and only the end of it all was at hand. And for this I consider them actually very faithless people, for not putting faith in themselves, their future strength and what could be accomplished together, but sinking instead into a delusion of destructiveness which only brought on division and animosity toward one another. However, for some good

reasons I also like think that their idea of heaven was a kind of prognostication for what we have now achieved with the Eschaton: a true afterlife, free of disease, hunger, pain, and the limitations which the corporeal world always confined us to. As long as the Eschaton has its power sustained, which is infinite, your father will continue to exist, comprehensively, forever. Everyone in the Eschaton lives forever. When your life ends, if you too pass here at the facility, we will sustain your essence as well and introduce it within the Eschaton; the two of you will be united.”

“It sounds amazing,” I told the Doctor. “But what is the capacity of the Eschaton, how many souls, if that’s what they are, can such a device hold; and how does it work?”

“It does have a limited capacity,” the Doctor admitted. “But as we advance in capacity additional units should be able to link together to create an expanding network. Working essentially by mirrors: light, being an everlasting wave-particle duality made infinite, your father’s neural emulation, which we call his ‘*Manuscript*’, is captured in light-wave by what amounts to a rotating prismatic mirror. This is sustained in a fiber-optic network patterned after the human brain, optimized for maximum efficiency, of course. The effect wraps the phase velocity back upon itself through reflection. Not unlike your own neural oscillations produce within your own brain – creating within it an infinite environment not unfamiliar with the world one has known here, or any which one’s mind might conceive, as all worlds are essentially mental constructs of the Nous in which one has partaken of in life. The revelation was that soul has always been an embodied spirit: an infinite imprisoned within a finite. The Eschaton only exorcises this.”



THE PEARL –

Time is a vandal entering the clam of the heart as though a grain of sand. It is our long irritation with it that slowly forms the pearl of invention.

The sensation of Time is an irritant which spurs the endeavors of man to an extension of the self, encompassing it with Spatial transformations.

Emerging from the shell of now the arrival of the future crests upon the wave of this incursion... *And if its shore I now could reach / I'd be a joyful jeweler.*



SCHOOLS OF THE ARCHIPELAGO –

“But in thy breast a mind inhabits...” – Homer

Mrs. Mircea stood in front of the class and pointed to a map of the solar system. “Many hundreds of years ago,” she told the students, “our ancestors were forced to leave planet Earth and settle permanently on Mars. Can anybody tell me why it was necessary to do this?”

Several hands shot up quickly.

“Sue,” said Mrs. Mircea pointing to a student in the last row of seats.

Sue Whitley stood up and answered: “Because the sun had grown in size and the planet was made a vast uninhabitable desert where life could no longer survive.”

“Very good, Sue,” Mrs. Mircea complimented. Turning again to the map, she continued: “The inhabitable zone in the solar system was extended outward to include the planet Mars and the Asteroid Belt where we now live. Can anybody tell me when the first colonies were established in the Asteroid Belt?”

Again several hands were raised, but Mrs. Mircea called not on any of them, instead singling out a disinterested student not paying attention. “Arthur, can you tell me when the first colonies were established in the Asteroid Belt?”

Arthur Ceregate leaned back into his chair and answered: “The first colonies were established twenty-five hundred years ago this year on Argos and Ceres by the Great Five Thousand.”

“Very good,” said Mrs. Mircea. “And how many minor-planets are there in the solar system, can you tell me that?”

“There are over 700,000 minor-planets in the solar system, with about 250,000 planetoids in the Asteroid Belt. Of these there are over 200 with diameters over one-hundred

kilometers, which are inhabited.”

“Very impressive,” Mrs. Mircea commended. “You have been doing your homework.”

Sue Whitley folded her arms across her chest and huffed. Arthur Ceregate shot her a cold glaring eye which signaled his annoyance with her attitude of constant academic competition. “If you want to lock wits with the bull,” he leaned over and whispered to her. “You better be ready for the horn.”

Mrs. Mircea returned to the map and detailed the larger of the minor-planets: “Ceres, Vesta, Pallas and Hygiea each are home now to the colonial capitols and were the first to confederate with their smaller neighbors in the Treaty of the Archipelagos twenty-four hundred years ago. Can anyone tell me the original nationalities of the various Archipelagos?” asked Mrs. Mircea of the class.

This time no one raised their hand to answer.

“OK then. Tonight, that will be your homework. I want a hundred words on each of the six nationalities that signed the Confederate Archipelagos Treaty. Is that clear?”

The students mumbled back their usual response.

As the bell sounded, the students filed out of the building for the mid-day recess. Mrs. Mircea reported to the front office, as a new student that afternoon was being enrolled at the school.

“She’s a *relocatee*,” said Janna, the principle’s secretary, to Mrs. Mircea of the new girl sitting alone in the principle’s glass-fronted office.

“Why is that?” asked the teacher, knitting her brow. “They haven’t had to relocate anyone in over two-hundred years, it’s so unheard of anymore.”

“Well, don’t tell anyone, but I think it might have been for religion,” said Janna confidentially, leaning in over the office counter.

“Oh my,” exclaimed Mrs. Mircea, looking around as if something most taboo had been uttered.

Janna nodded in assent. “I caught a good glance at her paperwork this morning,” she admitted. “Plus, I overheard Principle Hurley in conference last week discussing, of all things, religion. She is what that must have been all about. Religion, can you imagine that? In this day and age? She did look very meek when she got here.”

“You know, my Master’s program at the University required a class on religion,” explained Mrs. Mircea. “It was a very interesting class. Some of it was not so scary as you might think. I mean, it *is* all so primitive, divisive and violent; but some of the early sorts were actually quite poetic and natural.”

“I don’t know anything about it, other than its just plain wrong,” admitted Janna distancing herself from the very thought of it.

“Oh my, the destruction it caused before it was tabooed. I’m sure you know our Earthly history and such,” declared Mrs. Mircea demurely. “I just can’t imagine somebody today actually *wanting* to worship anything, it seems so degrading and deceitful. Do you know what sort of religion she was caught practicing?”

“I don’t know,” replied Janna. “She comes from some territory where they have very isolated communities I know that. Somewhere around the Kirkwood Gap, I suspect. I heard the principle say something of it the other day.”

“Hmmm...What is her name?” asked Mrs. Mircea, fixing her eye upon the figure sitting behind the cloudy glass of the principle’s office.

“Diane D’Artemis.”

“Ah, she’s named for Artemis. From the Greek!” exclaimed the teacher in a hushed but excited voice. “Artemis was a goddess of the woods, she was a hunter. Her cult was one

of great beauty and nobility; she was the spirit of the hunt, a very natural embodiment, in league with the deer and the birds. We must introduce her to the archery team.”

“Oh, yes,” Janna concurred, not immediately grasping upon the notion of a ‘hunt’.

“The first Games of the Season begin in a month on Ceres, if she is eligible. – I’d imagine she’d be very knowledgeable with the bow, her deviser esteemed it most highly.”



THE EPONYMOUS BOAT –

I.

In 1494, when the humanist Sebastian Brant published *Das Narrenschiff*, or The Ship of Fools, in Basel, it was still a quarter century before Luther devised his Ninety-five theses against the indulgences of Christian absolution.

“Their lords were smug,” confessed the good Doctor, “hypocritical, greedy and materialistic, they were narrow and conventional, vulgar and ruthless but, perhaps worst of all, completely lacking in taste. A man of letters, like Brant, critical of powerful bosses and being one who possessed a talent to assail against the rising tide of conformity was deemed by the most righteous of men anathema, and could only aid in the upturning of all true piety. Art, and worst of all artists themselves, are an outrage to moral conventions, especially amongst those who feel the right to moral war. To them art is totally useless. For art is edifying, and the flattered and the flatterers feel no need of moral or intellectual improvement, as one cannot make better what one possesses not to begin with.”

Outside the seasick groans of the sailors filled the fo’c’sle with a low trembling that rose and fell with the waves.

“These men are bereaved with the changes of the sea; fed only on white bread, they upset easily with the introduction of spice to their diet. The old man of whom you care for, was once the captain of a marauder, a privateer as it was known, which curried slaves and trinkets looted from simpler nations for the avaricious societies of an even less noble lot. Beware of the deluded hallucinations which he relates in his accountings of the past, they conceal many horrors that, upon his death-bed, he hopes to pass along to your youth as figments of virtue, which they are not.”

"I see the terror in his soul which, more than his infirmity, ravages his heart as it grows weaker," admitted the boy watching the shadows pass beneath the doorway. "All his efforts upon me raise only his moralizing to dismay and the interior darkness of malcontent always betrays him."

"With his death is born a new era of cruel convictions," continued the Doctor, "where wealth and power are the righteous ends of all man's means. Yet, look at him now, broken and delirious with a hatred for all those who lent not a service for his desires. It's hard to swim with so much baggage; pockets filled with coin will only sink a man in the waters of remembrance. Saint Grobian is his blessed patron, the almshouse brewmeister of all their seasickness." The boy lowered his eyes and trailed the Doctor's words as they slid beneath the doorway with the wan light and the pipe-smoke.

"In the New World they will model their conquests on the barbarous sackings of all previous civilizations and find in its atrocities the Romantic seeds of great adoration. But how long can it last; until every stone is reduced of its last holding?"

The Doctor turned again to the papers which occupied him and wrote out a few painful lines. Throughout the long insufferable night, the seasick sailors clung to their confidences, nervously sorting the bones of old sins.

"Barbarian castles do not linger finely in the air, but rot beneath the waves. As eternity finally changes him into Himself, the Poet arouses with a naked sword, his century terrified not to have known that death triumphed in his voice!"

II.

"Strange things we have in heart that will to hand," said the Doctor, sounding the windlass. "Everybody eventually

comes to doubt if they are indeed men of vision... Xenophon, an honest man if ever there was, recalls in the *Memorabilia* of Socrates, his friend's attitudes toward the want of money. He said: *'Pay makes one a servant to the humors of other people and therefore a slave in such a fashion.'* This was not a completely uncommon disposition to carry through the centuries and one might come across a number of similar examples amongst the histories of various luminaries. It was certainly practiced along the coasts of Ionia when those prosperous cities of our youth once tolerated thought. After all, this is where Anaxagoras returned when asked politely to leave democratic Athens or find himself dead for speaking his mind. From Phoenicia to the Bosphorus the coastal cedars here were once so magnificent that the Pharaohs themselves were mummified in their resin; even Solomon ordered his Temple to be built of their timber. All is gone now; as gone as our tolerance for thought. Your Captain is stern, but he's right: love should be left in port if one wants to sail upon these *godly seas*."

"Then why are you here, if not for some personal gain?" I asked the good Doctor.

"Carelessness, I suppose," he answered, picking up a sextant and pointing it skyward toward the North Star. "I don't expect you would have any inclination of what that might mean, being so young."

"I understand the principle of it," I replied.

"And suppose you do... That girl you left in Samos, do you think she'll ever grasp the principles of your adventures in the exploration of Time?" he asked, logging the angle between the horizon and Polaris.

"In another lifetime, perhaps. Far into the future when no right idea of these gods is left to epitomize the call of passionate of men."

“Perhaps,” he continued. “These seas we sail are so many tears of that loss. They may now swell with the sweat of a humid lust, but a man I have heard spoken of who died on Golgotha hill might have labored under no different a sun than the perspirations of eunuch slaves who guard the harems of Eastern kings. Be careful what you wish for, it just might come true.”

I thought of nothing else the rest of the night, knowing full well that no sea could fill such an emptiness as that which two star-crossed lovers might fathom. As the moon descended and disappeared below the horizon, the stars overhead played out their celestial pageantries. With the bow fixed upon a southerly course, the Doctor rode out the night in the bowsprit, watching the phosphorous turn in the cleavage and singing old mariner songs in a distant, forlorn tenor.



POSEIDON'S HORSES –

Mytilene: 2:45 am –

The touch of waiting / the failing wind
gilded by the moon's porcelain deconstruction.

The faint smell of patchouli –
adulteries / Sappho's slender hand...

A light from the window breaks across the door /
catching the sleeping profile of her face
which carves the sleek silhouette of an ancient amphora
overturned upon the wall.

Outside the sounds of silence twist in the summer leaves
and cast upon the open balcony their citrus scent.

They combine with the curve of the crescent moon /
the sleeping vessel / and fill the breeze with that ivory foal
riding down from the heavens –
the astronomer's dreamy bay.

On a chair her clothes drape provocatively
as if she had just vanished from inside of them –
their receding forms delineate what is missing inside.

Already the neighboring houses have dematerialized
along the incandescent banks of the bedsides.

As somewhere in a tangent universe
Poseidon's horses turn in the prow of a failing ship /
finding the lip at the edge of the world
and skirting within a breath of oblivion –
the shadow's wind blows suspicions of illusion
over all that I am.



IN AN APPLE ORCHARD –

*“An ancient tree there is with blossoms, on which
birds call to the Hours.”*

– Voyage of Bran

Arthur Ceregate laid back under the lithe, drooping boughs and breathed in the scent of the apple-blossoms. Through the shifting shadows of the orchard Artemis moved silently, her image alighting only fleetingly upon the many scattered motes of sunlight.

“What are you doing?” he says, propping himself up on his elbows.

“I was out along the isthmus, there’s quite a harvest to be made,” she replied, wrapping her hand caressingly around the red sphere of a dangling fruit. “Another island has appeared due west. It’s quite near and well grown.”

“You mean, it’s not a desert, like all the others?” queried Arthur. “What are its features?”

“Well, it has a peak that’s shorn and lush, and a verdant valley walled in some two leagues square.”

“Where there is life,” he recalled, “there’s the possibility of people. Did you see any signs?” he asked, springing to his feet.

“I can’t be sure,” she said. “You need to see for yourself, I’ll show you.”

The two gathered a few provisions and departed with excitement. The isthmus extended far out into the bay where, when the ebbing tides were low, they had often harvested horseshoe crabs and mussels. At times here, they discovered, small and vagrant islands would assemble and disappear according to the seeming whims of the deity. Frequently they appeared as only tiny accumulations of stone, but at times larger desert-wrought patches of land manifested, to which on one occasion he alone had made

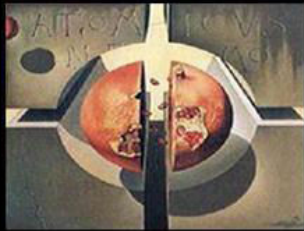
voyage when it appeared very close to their island home. There he found traces of a colossal monument very ancient and in great ruin. Broken visages cast in stone lay strewn about the remains of a mysterious structure. The discovery had deeply affected him, for he never remembered once having met another living soul except that of his wife, Artemis. Those discarded and stately figures which had lain abandoned and forlorn in those strange and foreboding sands wrenched at his imagination. The idea of other people and their curious habits filled his dreaming mind with hours of whimsy. Afterwards, the watch for new lands became a favorite pastime. Usually these islands disappeared within hours or a day, never to be seen again. Almost all, save for the odd arctic landscape, had been desert environments. Very rarely had an island appeared which bore any semblance of vegetation and these were so distant as to beg of the imagination. But, as each one did it brought with it an ever-lasting glimmer of hope; hope for a new world; a hope for other people.

As they arrived Artemis noted the island was much closer now than when first she had seen it; within an hour's voyage if the winds bore favor, and they did. Out upon the isthmus, the two scaled a cluster of singing bird-wing trees and gazed out over the distance toward the foreign land. Vague spires of smoke were seen rising from the thicket.

"It's vast," he exclaimed with a hint of fear in his voice, shielding the glare of the sun with an open hand. "And not uninhabited."



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Fragments From Chronos & Other Writings

J.J. Loe

"The memory also contains the innumerable principles and laws of numbers and dimensions."

Dissociate shores and wandering islands that appear and disappear again according to the whims and caprices of an absent minded deity. Scenes and characters recurring again and again throughout time. Trees and birds transmogrified. A ghostly city of wolves. A secret manuscript and an ominous sense of time unhinged. These are just some of the traits of the bizarre and challenging world of *Chronos*.

By ascribing the ancient mosaic cosmology of Anaxagoras' Homoiomeric philosophy to the prosaic collection of fiction known as *Fragments From Chronos*, the writer J.J. Loe has fashioned a series of strange tales that span the ages from primitive man to transhumanist futurism. Their effect portrays the Eternal Return, a literary Oroboros revealing all Time happening concurrently.

Accompanying *Chronos* are also represented selected *Counterfeit Poems*, as well as an assortment of the uniquely fragmented essays, apothegms and quasi-Romantic philosophical writings known as *Logological Fragments*, both of which play also into the web of fiction creating a fascinating metaphysical universe where Hellenic themes meet Twentieth Century Modernism introducing post-modernist realms of thought and experience in a uniquely original manner of style and substance.

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